Classic Gamer Magazine

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Winter 1999-2000 Issue #2 www.classicgamer.com

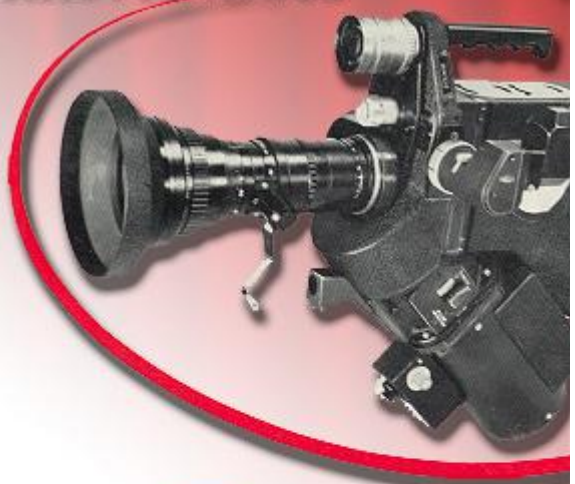
Movies and Classic Videogames
Like Oil and Water?

New Products From the CG Expo
What Shined and What Didn't

Classic Remake Avalanche!
Pac-Man World, Pong, Centipede and RR64 Reviewed

Interviews With:

Don Thomas
Buckner & Garcia
Howard Scott Warshaw



Rusty: ***"Hey you got 'Pac-Man'?"***

Cousin Dale: ***"No."***

Rusty: ***"Uh, you got 'Space Invaders'?"***

Cousin Dale: ***"No."***

Rusty: ***"You got 'Asteroids'?"***

Cousin Dale: ***"Nah...but my dad does... can't even sit on the toilet some days."***

- National Lampoon's Vacation, 1983

Holiday Greetings From

Classic Gamer Magazine

Classic Gamer Magazine #2

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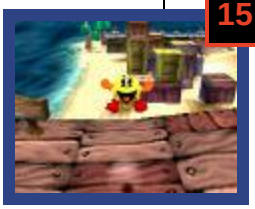

Pac-Man World

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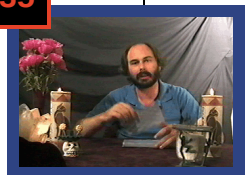

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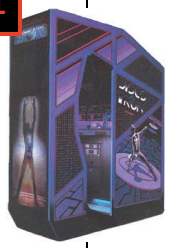

We de-rezz Tron

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Chris Lion Blows Up Megaforce

Reset

by
Chris Cavanaugh

Yuletide Felicitations!

Fa la la la la!! Tis the season for classic videogames! If you're like me, chances are you have fond memories of your classic games tied in with the holiday season. For me they go together like milk and cookies for Santa. While you may think it's pathetic that some of my greatest Christmas memories are about videogames, they never failed to bring my family together for some of our most enjoyable holiday moments.

Looking back I realized just how much the **Atari** and **ColecoVision** were a part of the family during the holidays. Like a spoiled child, those consoles were always the center of attention. When friends and family visited, we would always wind up in some intense competition playing four-player **Warlords**, **Lady Bug**, **Pac-Man** and sometimes even **Smurfs**. I would even find myself gloating a bit because I could dock my ship for repairs in **Starmaster** while my older cousin Tim had difficulties piloting the ship to begin with.

I highly recommend pulling out some of your older systems this holiday season when people come to visit. A good round of **Combat,** combined with some "enhanced" Egg Nog, will keep you in the holiday spirit.

Classic Remake Frenzy

And since you'll be dragging out the old consoles for the holidays, you may as well keep the newer ones handy, as well.

I'm sure you've noticed we've been recently been inundated with tons of classic remakes and compilation games. I say bring 'em on! Inside this issue we take a look at a few of them including the "new" Atari remakes of **Pong** for the PC and PSX, as well as the new **Centipede** for the Sega Dreamcast. There is also an incredible **new Pac-Man** hack available for download to play on your Atari emulator (turn to the Newswire for details). Also, check out our review on Namco's **Pac-Man World.** The game is probably more fun than you would first expect.

That's Hollywood!

Also in this issue, you'll find our take on the strange marriage of Hollywood and videogames. How does **Tron**, **E.T.,** or **Revenge of the Beefsteak Tomatoes** hold up today?

We also feature three special interviews: Atari programmer **Howard Scott Warshaw**, Atari Alum **Don Thomas,** and we caught up with Pac-Maniacs **Buckner and Garcia**. So grab your favorite chair and get comfortable. Lights! Joystick! Action!

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Raves 'n Rants

Got something to say?
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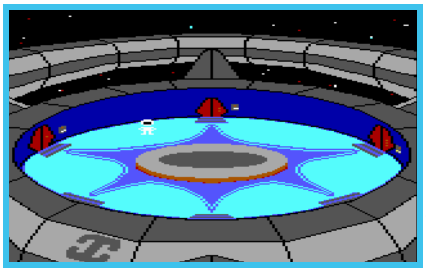
Twilight, Starflight, First Star I See Tonight...

Classic Gamers,

I am a thirty-something, ex-military, turned full-time college student, who played a PC game called Starflight back in the 80s. It was a wonderful game, and I have busted numerous brain cells trying to find the game again. Do you have any suggestions or hints as to where I might find it? I would also like to find a game called Twilight 2000.

Being a disabled vet allows a lot of time to review other games, and those two were great! Any and all help in this matter will be greatly appreciated.



Starflight

-Ken via e-mail

Ken,

We haven't located the game itself, but we do know of a website dedicated to PC games of the past. Go to www.mobygames.com and start your clicking. Here you will find info on Starflight I and II, as well as information on a potential Starflight III.

For Twilight: 2000 information, there is an Internet mailing list dedicated to this game. Send an e-mail to: Majordomo@lists.MPGN.com with the phrase "subscribe twilight2000" in the body of the e-mail.

Hopefully that will get you started.

Time for Schnapps and Bratwurst!

Dear CGM,

Thanks for a great magazine! FINALLY! I waited a long time for a magazine like this to come out. I'm already a subscriber and have a question and a comment:

How about (in the future perhaps) reviewing the endless classic computer games? Games like Castle Wolfenstein, Raid Over Moscow, or Zork? Ahh...the memories. It just makes me want to dig out my old C64. And how about Arcade games? You guys can't pass those up.

I love everything about the magazine. It just makes me feel great to read an all new review of a classic game like Combat, for example, in the last issue. The classic advertisements are a blast, and the Atari cartridge showdown on the website is great.

I can't wait for the next issue. Damn I wish it wouldn't take so long! Hint, Hint!

-George Albanis, via e-mail

George,

First off, thanks for the kind words. Secondly, next issue will be dedicated to the classic games of adventure (including Adventure!). This will also give us the opportunity to roll out expanded coverage of the classic computer games as well. Simply put, you can't talk about the adventure gaming genre without talking about the Zork series and Scott Adams. Around here we're suckers for Castle Wolfenstein, too.

We'd like to note that the expanded computer coverage has come from the demand of our readers, so keep your suggestions coming in. Also, we hope to expand our arcade coverage in the next issue.

Honorable Mentions

We were thumbing through a few of the more "mainstream" videogaming magazines on the newsstands and were very pleased to find these kind words written about us.

"Tips & Tricks Magazine" wrote:

"'As you can guess from the title, Classic Gamer Magazine doesn't necessarily belong in our "Fanzine Patrol" column. At 52 pages, its size is enough to distinguish CGM from the eight-page Xeroxed 'zines that we usually feature here - but the bigger difference is that it's entirely in color. With retro-feature articles on games like Donkey Kong, Publisher Chris Cavanaugh admits to aiming for the style and content of the original Electronic Games mag from the early '80s. In some ways, CGM actually exceeds that standard…"

"Electronic Gaming Monthly" wrote:

"Reading this issue of CGM was like opening up a box of classic gaming goodies you haven't seen for years . . . A few favorite articles include the look back on various versions of Donkey Kong, a guide to classic video game collecting and game rarity . . . and an article remembering the days of '80s video magazine "Electronic Games."

Thanks Tips &Tricks and EGM!!

CLASSIC GAMER NEWSWIRE

Bushnell Begins New Venture

Atari and Chuck E. Cheese founder, Nolan Bushnell, currently serves as Chairman and CEO of uWink.com, a business focused on the Coin-op gaming industry.

Based in Culver City, Ca., Bushnell and his uWink.com team hope to change the face of Internet entertainment by streaming it into public venues and establishing mass multi-player gaming tournaments worldwide.

uWink.com will be developing an e-commerce, games, and entertainment network housed on touch screen terminals located in public venues such as airports, bars, train stations, hotels, and restaurants. The uWink.com network offers an innovative range of easy to play arcade games, chat, and other entertainment features, complemented by a variety of e-commerce capabilities including hotel and airplane reservations.

Visit www.uwink.com for details

Britmeet 3 Announced

The U.K. classic gaming event, Britmeet, will be held Saturday June 24th, 2000 in the town of Hertford, England, which is about 20 minutes north of London.

The show will feature all day dealer and fanzine stalls, displays of rare prototypes, a trading room, all day screening of classic game themed films and videos, single player game tournaments with prizes, a trivia quiz, and an auction.

Visit britmeet.co.uk for details

Play Shockwaved Classic Games Online

Midway, Sega, and Atari have teamed up with Shockwave.com to give you the ability to play classic games online. Choose between Columns, Frogger, Centipede, Missile Command, and several others.

Midway will soon join the fray by adding Marble Madness, Joust, Defender, Spy Hunter, and Moon Patrol to the list.

Go to www.shockwave.com for the fun.

CLASSIC GAMER NEWSWIRE cont. . .

Classic Gamer Magazine Hosts Online "Atari 2600 Cartridge Showdown"

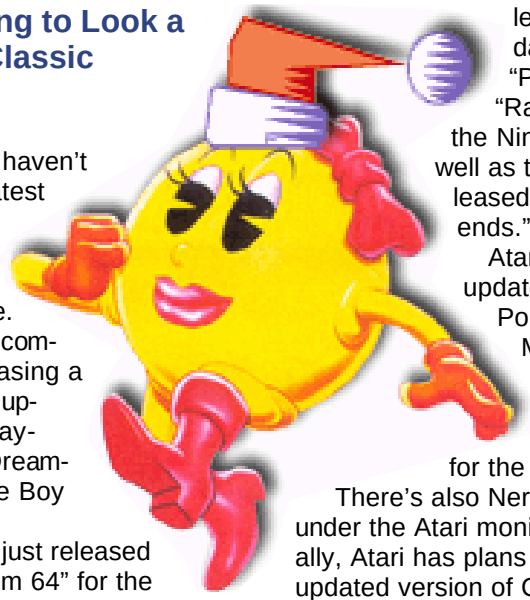
Would you like a say in which Atari 2600 cartridge is crowned the greatest of all time? Does Enduro drive laps around Pole Position? Can Joust knock off Defender? Will Centipede trample Frogger? The decision is yours in the Atari 2600 Cartridge Showdown, hosted online by Classic Gamer Magazine. Throughout the coming weeks, guests are invited to visit www.classicgamer.com to vote for their favorites. Game contenders will be rotated every few days, so visit early and vote often!

Winners from each round will proceed to further rounds in an attempt to defend their titles. The battle will eventually be won when the final two games go head-to-head and a "Greatest Atari 2600 Cartridge" winner will be crowned.

Go to:

www.classicgamer.com

It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like a Classic Christmas!



In case you haven't looked at the latest game releases, you may be surprised by what's out there.

Videogame companies are releasing a slew of classic updates for the PlayStation, N64, Dreamcast, and Game Boy Color.

Namco has just released "Namco Museum 64" for the Nintendo 64. This compilation includes Galaga, Dig Dug, Ms. Pac-Man, Galaxian, Pac-Man, and Pole Position.

Midway's Christmas offerings include "Arcade Party Pak," which features Rampage, KLAX, Toobin', 720 Degrees, Super Sprint, and Smash TV. Another Midway release is an updated "Paperboy" and "Rampage 2" for the Nintendo 64, as well as the recently released "Gauntlet Legends."

Atari's impressive updates include Pong, Q*Bert, and Missile Command for the PC and PSX, and Centipede for the Dreamcast.

There's also Nerf Arena Blast, under the Atari moniker. Additionally, Atari has plans to release an updated version of Combat sometime in 2000.

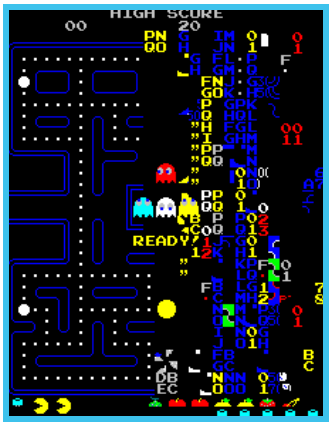
Activision's gifts to classic gamers include a Space Invaders update for the PC, Game Boy Color, PlayStation, and N64.

So, rejoice this holiday season by flashing back to the 80s with these great offerings. 'Tis the season to be classic!

$100,000 Prize Promised to First Video Game Player to Solve Pac-Man's Mysterious "Split Screen"

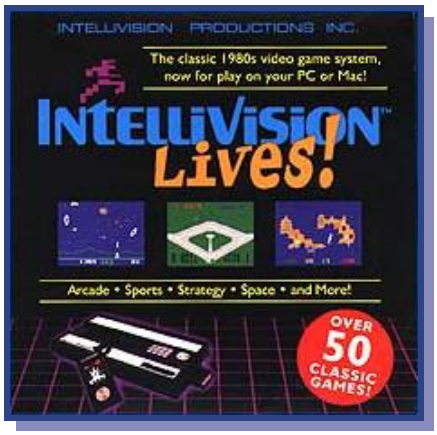
An American hot sauce manufacturer has offered a $100,000 reward to the first Pac-Man player who can solve the mysterious "split-screen" that ends everybody's game at the 256th board.

An additional $95,000 is set aside for players who, before January 1, 2000, can break decades-old high scores on fifteen other classic video games. Rickey's World Famous Sauce will give $10,000 prizes to the first players to score over 1 million points on any of eight different games following Twin Galaxies' official rules. The games are: Ms. Pac-Man, Carnival, Berzerk, Donkey Kong, Frogger, Rally-X, Hypersports, and Tutankham.



www.twingalaxies.com

CLASSIC GAMER NEWSWIRE cont. . .


INTELLIVISION PRODUCTIONS INC.
The classic 1980s video game system, now for play on your PC or Mac!
INTELLIVISION Lives!
Arcade • Sports • Strategy • Space • and More!
OVER 50 CLASSIC GAMES!

New Games Announced for "Intellivision Lives 2" Compilation

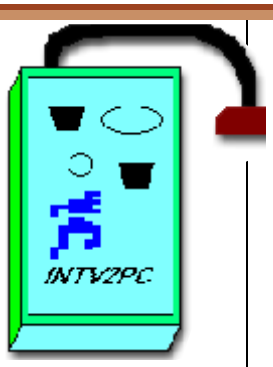
Intellivision Productions recently announced the games that will be present on the Intellivision Lives 2 compilation. Many classic games were sorely missed on the first effort and will be a welcome addition on their second offering. At present, no release date has been set.

Games will include:

Atlantis, B-17 Bomber, Demon Attack, Beauty and the Beast, Atlantis, Dreadnaught Factor, Dracula, Ice Trek, Dragonfire, Pitfall, Happy Trails, Microsurgeon, Safe Cracker, River Raid, Swords and Serpents, Tropical Trouble, Stampede, Worm Whomper, as well as several others.

www.intellivisionlives.com

Division Software Offers Better Control For Intellivision Lives CD



Division Software of Ontario, Canada sells an adapter called The INTV2PC, which allows you to connect your Intellivision disc controller to your PC. The device will allow for much greater precision over the standard keyboard option.

They offer 2 models which go for $30 and $35 dollars.

For full details on how to obtain the device, visit their website at:

http://www3.sympatico.ca/division.software/

"Protector" for the Jaguar Now Shipping

The long awaited Jaguar game, Protector, is now on sale and available to play. Protector is a "Defender" like game featuring over 40 waves of play and stunning graphics. Visit Songbird's website for details.

http://songbird.atari.org

"Jerry G" Calls It Quits

Citing failing health as the cause, long time classic videogame collector and seller, Jerry Greiner, has decided to close shop.

His immense collection is now up for grabs at a discounted rate, and merchandise is moving quickly.

Also up for sale is the domain name he has used for his sales, http://www.atari2600.com. It is Jerry's hope that once the website is sold, the new owner will see that it gets used as Jerry had once envisioned it. "We. . .intended to make subsections of our website available to other collectors to post their classic game pages, fanzines, stories, and whatever, if they so desired," Jerry stated on his website.

If you are interested in either the domain or the merchandise, visit Jerry G. at:

www.atari2600.com

New Pac-Man Hack Now Available For Download

Rob Kudla has created a new Pac-Man game, free to download, for use on Atari emulators. "Pac 26" is actually a hack of "Ms. Pac-Man" created to look more like the arcade version of Pac-Man. Rob created it for fun; he wanted to see what the 2600 version of Pac-Man might have looked like had it been done properly. This impressive creation includes blue walls, opening theme music as well as true-to-arcade sound effects.

http://24.25.144.93/raindog/

NINTENDO 64 RELEASE SCHEDULE FOR UPDATED AND CLASSIC RELATED GAMES

February 2000
Excitebike 64

March 2000
Zelda Gaiden

First Quarter 2000
Asteroids Hyper 64
Battlezone 64

Second Quarter 2000
Glover 2

TBA
Super Mario RPG 2
Ecco the Dolphin

SONY PLAYSTATION RELEASE SCHEDULE FOR UPDATED AND CLASSIC RELATED GAMES

January 2000
Road Rash: Jailbreak

March 2000
Gauntlet Legends
Mortal Kombat: Special Forces

June 2000
Spider-Man

Release Schedule

Release Schedule

GAME BOY RELEASE SCHEDULE FOR UPDATED AND CLASSIC RELATED GAMES

January 2000
1942
Pong

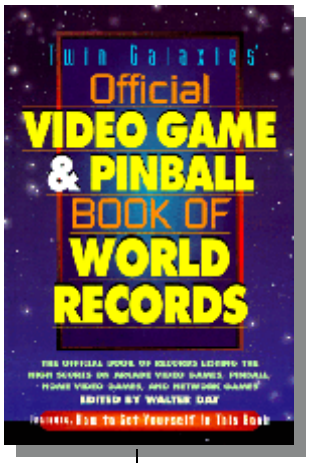
TBA
Gauntlet Legends
Toobin'

DREAMCAST RELEASE SCHEDULE FOR UPDATED AND CLASSIC RELATED GAMES

Second Quarter 2000
Gauntlet Legends

TBA
Ecco the Dolphin

Book Bytes



Official Video Game & Pinball Book of World Records

Edited by Walter Day

Sunstar Publishing, LTD.
116 North Court Street
Fairfield, Iowa 52556
$19.95 paperback
www.twingalaxies.com

Compiled by Twin Galaxies' Walter Day, the *Official Video Game & Pinball Book of World Records* is a massive 936 page collection of videogame high scores.

Not content with just listing arcade and pinball machine high scores, Mr. Day has also included high scores for newer consoles and classic systems. We guarantee reading these scores will inspire you to say, "I can beat that!" and drag out your old system. And if you do beat it, there are detailed instructions on how to submit your score.

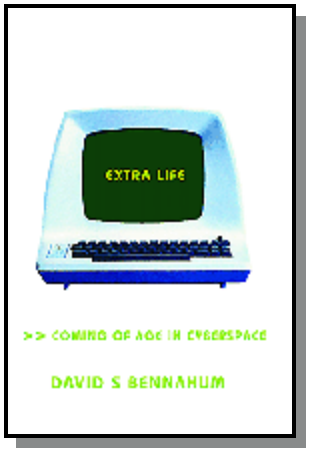
The last quarter of the book tells some of the more interesting stories of past videogaming tournaments. For instance, I was surprised to learn that even videogame record holders, like rock stars, trash their hotel rooms. One of the final chapters even provides a "Where are they now?" section in case you're wondering what's happened to many of the record holders.

If you've ever become obsessed with obtaining a high score, this book is definitely for you.

Extra Life

Coming of Age in Cyberspace

by David S. Bennahum



Basic Books
10 East 53rd Street
New York, N.Y. 10022
$12.00 paperback
www.basicbooks.com

Did you ever feel like a geek growing up? Do you still feel like one? David Bennahum's *Extra Life* is an autobiographical tale chronicling a boy's struggle of feeling like an outsider, having to deal with his parents' divorce, and how purchasing a computer steered him away from drugs, giving him direction in life.

It's also a love story. Only in this case the love is a computer and not a girl. The story is probably very accurate for those of us who, on weekend nights, were kept company by Castle Wolfenstein and the hum of our Apple II.

If you grew up in the late 70s and early 80s with any kind of fascination towards computers and videogames, you will certainly identify with Mr. Bennahum's experiences. He tells of late nights downloading software (often illegally) from BBS's, writing his first programs in basic, and of course making fun of his friends "Trash 80."

Extra Life is both hilarious and heartfelt, reminding you of the joys and frustrations of growing up in the computer age.

CGM

Classic Advertisement

1983

© 1983 Atari, Inc. All rights reserved. ™ Trademark of Sears, Roebuck and Co.
Which player is heading for victory?
Better find out. Here comes Centipede™ from Atari.
Look out. Centipede's escaping from the arcade. Grabbing every great arcade feature it can. And it's only from Atari, for use with the ATARI® 2600,™ Sears Video Arcade® systems, and the ATARI 5200™ SuperSystem.
There's the same relentless attack of centipedes, scorpions, fleas, and spiders. A mushroom garden. Changing screen colors with each new centipede. And each new one gets faster. So points get tougher.
ATARI
CENTIPEDE
And if it's points you want, you can get 10 times more by shooting for the head. Like the player on the right. He's about to hit the head for 100 points. But the player on the left is about to hit a body segment for a measly 10 points. A cheap shot.
So don't let Centipede get away. That wouldn't be using your head.
ATARI
A Warner Communications Company.

Last August, many new and impressive products made their debut at the Classic Gaming Expo '99 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Stella At 20 Volume 2

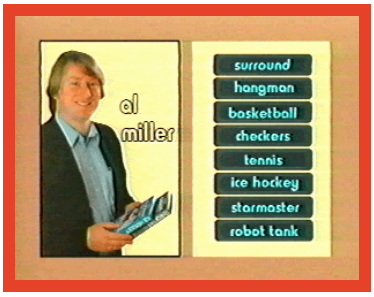
"Stella at 20" is a video documentary that tells the tale of the Atari 2600 - "The Little Engine That Could," told by the programmers who created the games.

Cyberpunks Entertainment has excelled in producing this documentary. The video's packaging, which looks exactly like an Atari 2600 game box, combined with crisp editing creates a slick presentation.

Volume 2 of the series takes a more "nuts and bolts" approach to how the games were created, and as a result, can get a bit technical. The programmers often talk computerese with each other instead of explaining to the viewer in layman's terms how the games were produced.

While it's fun to place faces with the programmers' names, I would hope future volumes include a more lighthearted look at what went into making the games so much fun to play.

Go to http://cyberpunks.atari.org/ for details.



Stella Gets a New Brain

The Cyberpunks have re-released "Stella Gets a New Brain" (at last!) and it has definitely been worth the wait.

Remember the Arcadia/Starpath Supercharger? It was a device that attached to an Atari 2600, enabling one to play graphically enhanced games via audio tape. Over time, the games' tapes wore out and replacing them became difficult due to their rarity. The Cyberpunks have digitally recorded the games onto CD's, so they can once again be enjoyed with your Supercharger.

Games include Phaser Patrol and Dragonstomper, as well as harder to find games such as Party Mix, Sword of Saros, and Survival Island.

But wait! There's more! The CD doubles as a CD-Rom for your computer, which gives you access to many extras. Stella scans, Stella project notes, Atari promo sheets, 2600 development tools, Atari type fonts, homebrew games, and even a song titled "Atari 2600" can be found. Go to http://cyberpunks.atari.org/ for details.

Once Upon Atari Vols 1 & 2

Yars' Revenge creator, Howard Scott Warshaw (interviewed on page 35), has created an informative and often hilarious account of his days working at Atari.

Featuring numerous interviews with such characters as Todd Frye (2600 Pac-Man), Rob Fulop (2600 Missile Command), and even Nolan himself, Warshaw has produced the perfect video time capsule about life at Atari.

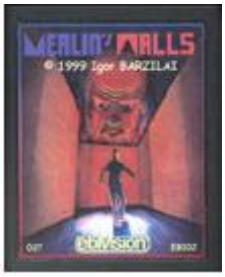
Volume 1, titled "House of Video Games," captures the spirit of what it was like to work on a day to day basis at Atari. You'll learn about floating frogs, wall walking, and when ceiling sprinklers attack!

Volume 2, titled "The Enemy Within," tells war stories of the programmers vs. management and the pitfalls of destitute programmers suddenly hitting the lottery.

Warshaw shows off his documentary making skills by keeping the interviews interesting, fun, and at a roller coaster pace. For more information, visit www.scottw.com.

Nolan speaks out in Once Upon Atari

Merlin's Walls and Pesco



The guys at Ebivision released two new games for the Atari 2600 as their follow-up to last year's release, "Alfred's Challenge." Early on, show goers formed a long line at Ebivision's table in hopes of snagging the limited edition (and autographed) cartridges, **Merlin's Walls** and **Pesco**.

Merlin's Walls is a difficult and confusing first person maze game. You have 80 seconds to earn "redemption" by finding your way out of a maze, where you have been trapped by "Merlin." Boundaries are difficult to discern, so it becomes a challenge to maintain any sense of direction. Also, the game was programmed in a fashion that requires the player to turn their television on its side. Not a very

Pesco

easy task with a 25+" set.

While we applaud the release of new games for the 2600, we believe Merlin's Walls misses the mark.

The other release from Ebivision is the Pac-Man clone, **Pesco**. Although graphically superior to the 2600 version of Pac-Man, the game play remains very much the same. The degree of difficulty has been upped a bit, but it still boils down to playing a fish-like Pac-Man game.

Merlin's Walls
Overall Rating: D

Pesco
Overall Rating: B-

Visit www.ebivision.com

Arcade 2000

Ever dreamed of having a collection of full size arcade games in your home? Obviously space and money are the main barring factors, but the folks at Arcade 2000 have a solution. The Arcade 2000 is a full size arcade cabinet for your PC, PlayStation, Nintendo 64, NES, Super NES, and Dreamcast videogame systems.

The PC model features a built-in 19" Super-Multisync monitor and speakers.

The most impressive feature, however, is the arcade style controls. It features two 8-way sticks to play games such as Robotron and Crazy Climber, and a standard four-way joystick to play games like Pac-Man and Donkey Kong. There are also buttons galore, so you can enjoy arcade-authentic Space Invaders, Asteroids, etc. They've even thrown in some pinball button flippers on the side as a place to plug in your flight yoke, steering wheel, or even a Tron joystick.

So, what will this model set you back? $1,550 + shipping. Not really that bad considering the cost of a full arcade. If you're on a budget, you can also order the control panel on its own.
Go to www.arcade2000.com for full details.

Yars' Revenge

Telegames has released a Game Boy version of the classic favorite, "Yars' Revenge."

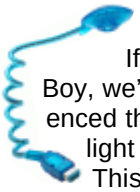
It's a fairly straightforward conversion of the original with an added bonus level. The object is to fire through a shield, which protects the Qotile enemy, and then destroy him using your Zorlon Cannon. The Qotile has two weapons of defense. The first, a slow moving homing device, constantly advances towards your ship; the other is a Qotile that has transformed into a Swirl. If Yars is hit by either, he will die.

After the Qotile has been destroyed, an explosion results, leaving a large but temporary debris field. If you can find the Ghost of Yars in this field, you'll be transported to an asteroid field where you must attempt to touch the ghost, giving you a higher energy yield for later levels.

The only downside to the game is that the entire playing field does not fit on a single screen. Unfortunately, you need to use your Yars to "scroll over" to the enemy location. This makes planning a decent strategy quite difficult. Being hit by Swirls with no warning is fairly common.

Overall Rating: B-

Nyko's Wormlight



If you own a Color Game Boy, we're sure you've experienced the frustration of no backlight source being included. This often makes it extremely difficult to see the screen and can cause you to hold your Game Boy at impossible angles to catch light. Of course the result is that you often catch glare instead.

Nyko has solved this problem with the Worlmlight. The light attaches to the Game Boy, requires no batteries, and has a lifetime lighting source. It is also an exceptionally durable item, surviving the many clutches of children at the CG Expo.
Visit www.nyko.com for details.

20th ANNIVERSARY
PAC-MAN WORLD
Pac is back celebrating his big two-oh!
Is he over the hill?
Or does he still pack that special magic?

Review
by Sarah Thomas

You're invited to Pac-Man's 20th birthday party! In celebration of our favorite yellow dot's birthday, Namco has released **Pac-Man World**, a 3D version of the classic game. While at first it may appear Namco has released this 3D game in order to keep up with the Joneses (everyone seems to be releasing 3D classic games), they have done a tremendous job at keeping with Pac-Man's personal style. The game offers three main modes of play: *Classic, 3D Maze, and 3D Quest.*

The *Classic* Pac-Man mode is just what it sounds like – the original game that entails guiding the dot-eating, ghost-chasing Pac-Man through various mazes. As fun and entertaining as this is, Pac-Man has so much more potential in today's gaming world, and Namco has excelled at adding a 3D spin on the 80's icon.

T Minus 10 for Pac

The *Maze* mode is a 3D version of the Classic, with the same basic objectives, but a few obstacles and surprising twists have been added. In the beginning, there are 18 different mazes to choose from; that number can increase to 36 after visiting the Galaxian mazes in the Quest mode.

The one-player-only *Quest* mode is the area that you'll probably spend most of your time. It begins with Pac-Man making his way to his birthday party, only to discover that his guests, Chomp-Chomp the dog, Baby Pac, Pooka (from Dig Dug), Professor Pac-Man, Pac-Man Junior, and Ms. Pac-Man, have all been kidnapped by Toc-Man and his ghostly minions. Pac-Man must go to Ghost Island and complete levels of game play in order to unlock his friends. However, because Toc-Man meant to capture Pac-Man, you can bet Pac's got an uphill battle ahead of him! Along the way, he'll find mazes, prizes, enemies, and an assortment of challenges.

Helivator Action

Ghost Island consists of six different themed "stages" of game play. The stages include: Pirate, Ruins, Space, Funhouse, Factory, and Mansion; within each stage are 3-4 levels, decorated accordingly.

Pac-Man begins his mission at Buccaneer Beach, which is a training level; hints are scattered throughout to help you learn his various moves.

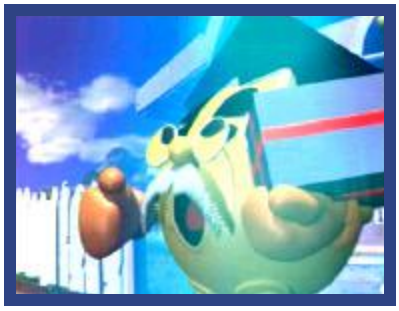
The 3D plumping-up of our yellow friend has allowed new movements to evolve, such as the butt-bounce, rev-roll, swimming, jumping, and turning metallic.

The butt-bounce can be called upon to open treasure chests, barrels, and crates, crush enemies (careful, not all can be done away with this easily!), reach high areas, and activate switches. The treasure chests, barrels, and crates either contain helpful objects or nothing at all. Switches come in three different colors and cause changes (opening doors, lowering bridges, etc.) once activated.

The rev-roll is a fun maneuver, allowing Pac-Man to run in place and then shoot off really quickly once you release the button (think Sonic). It can be used to make it up a steep hill, catapult over a ramp to reach a far-off area, or even attack some enemies. It's also used to activate helivators (platforms that transport Pac-Man horizontally or vertically across a space). When Pac-Man rev-rolls on a helivator, it causes a fan underneath to spin, which in turn moves the platform. In addition,

C'mon Get Happy!

there are rev-plates which work in much the same manner as helivators, except Pac-Man does not move; by activating the rev-plate, something *else* moves.



Professor Pac Prepares for Beam Up

Pac-Man has also learned a bit about water safety and can now swim. In fact, not only does he swim, but he can dive deep underwater and perform elegant dolphin jumps to eject himself back onto dry land.

Some levels offer Pac-Man the ability to "turn metallic." If he comes across a chrome power-up, it will turn him into a metal ball. This makes him invincible for a short period of time and also causes him to become very heavy. He will then sink to the bottom of the water and will be able to break open those treasure chests located in the water.

In the beginning of the Quest, Pac-Man is only able to visit a few levels; additional ones open once he has completed others. There are a couple of different methods in completing levels: find and accomplish everything and gain a 100% score (which is very helpful in the eventual rescuing of friends and expanding overall gaming possibilities), or run through as quickly as possible in order to get to the end, save the game, and thus open up further levels to tackle. If you want to try and complete the levels in their entirety, there are a few things you should know along the way.

Pac Takes Inventory

First, you will encounter fruit doors with a picture of a certain fruit on the front. Pac-Man must have a matching fruit in his supply (scattered throughout the level) in order to open the door. On the other side of the door is generally a P-A-C-M-A-N letter or a switch. Pac-Man must, in order to achieve the full score, collect all the letters to spell out PAC-MAN.

In addition to the fruit doors, Pac-Man can also enter Galaxian doors (provided he has the appropriate "galaxian" icon) which will transport him to a maze game. Each maze that you encounter in the Quest mode adds to the maze collection in the Maze mode. The mazes are similar to those in the Classic Pac-Man game: you run around collecting dots while avoiding, and sometimes eating, ghosts. The big difference, of course, is that they are now 3D, feature themed designs, and have obstacles and twists along the way.

Let's not forget Pac-Man's overall goal here: to rescue his poor friends, who are now locked in cages. Each game stage contains a captive friend, but you'll need a key (which may not be located in the same level as the caged friend) to unlock the cage. I'd love to tell you what happens once you rescue all your friends, but I'm still stuck on the damn Galaxian level!!

Pac-Man World offers a clever new twist on one of classic gaming's most beloved character. What made the original Pac-Man so much fun was its relative simple concept of guiding the yellow dot through a maze, trying to eat all the pac-dots, and avoiding/eating the ghosts. This concept was enhanced by the fact that it wasn't always as easy as it looked and became quite addicting to try and beat. It is wonderful to see that Namco understood that when creating Pac-Man World.

By hard core gamers' standards, Pac-Man World could be considered too easy; it doesn't have a lot of the characteristics of today's popular games. However, the overall enjoyment that one found in the original game is certainly present in the 20th Anniversary Pac-Man. He is still an adorable character, with great facial expressions, advanced mobility, and plenty of challenges to keep him busy. The game's graphics are very attractive, with bright colors and creative characters.

Pac vs. The Galaxians

The only real downfall is that sometimes Pac-Man is a little tough to control with the PlayStation controller. In one level, precision control is required in order to dodge arrows shooting up from the floor while running away from a monster; this proves difficult.

The learning curve isn't too steep, but some of the levels are tough enough to make me curse the yellow-man! It does, however, score very high points with me, and I am glad that Pac-Man still elicits such an endearing reaction. As in the original game, it is "cute" enough to pull in casual gamers, yet challenging and entertaining enough to keep the more die-hard gamers interested. And as a special "classic gaming" note, there is a level called King Galaxian which tests Pac-Man's ability against his old peers!

CGM

Luckily, Hasbro Interactive has jumped on the Sega Dreamcast bandwagon. Their first offering is the updated version of the classic Centipede.

Game play retains the same spirit of the PlayStation and PC versions. Players take charge of maneuvering Wally the Bean Counter in his shooter in an attempt to save the village and inhabitants of Weedom from the attacks of the Queenpede and her many toadies. Your ultimate goal is to fight through the levels and eventually take on the Queenpede herself. Unlike the classic arcade version, you now have the freedom to go wherever you like on the battlefield. This allows you to take the battle to the advancing insects. It also gives you the ability to find power-ups and secret areas, which are sprinkled throughout the levels.

So, what's the difference between the PlayStation and PC versions of Centipede? The graphics for starters. Centipede takes full advantage of the Dreamcast's power, making the attacking insects appear beautifully ugly when you get up close and personal with them.

Control is also vastly improved, allowing for greater precision shots; the shoulder buttons provide smoother strafing techniques. Another much needed improvement allows you to change angles more easily. Now you can get right down to Wally's level and aim more accurately.

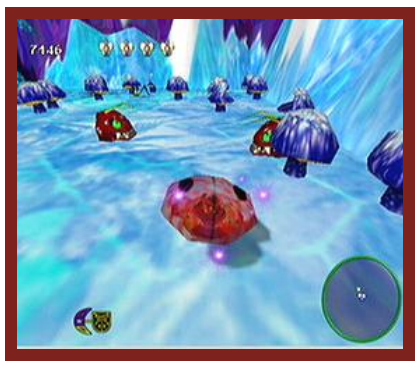
The music is nothing too obtrusive unless you find techno music overly annoying. Sound effects are cleverly combined using a mix of classic arcade sounds, along with all new ones.

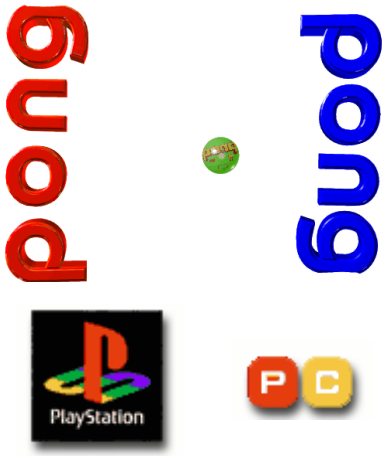
Also on the disc is an arcade perfect version of Centipede.

Original artwork borders the playfield, and the controls are much easier to utilize than the PSX version (although it is still difficult to get that precision placement needed to take out the dropping fleas).

Graphics: A
Sound: B+
Overall Rating: B+

Publisher: Hasbro Interactive
Developer: Leaping Lizard Software
Release Date: December 1999





Since obtaining the Atari name and properties, it was probably inevitable that Hasbro would sooner or later remake Pong. We figured it would show up eight or so years from now, after their well of ideas had run dry and creativity was uninspired. Gladly, Hasbro jumped on this Atari title while the getting was good. The result is wonderful. Almost.

Pong is an extremely fun game to play. The idea is still the same: "Avoid missing the ball for high score," only now you get power-ups and multi-balls in your quest for the high score.

Remember how much fun it was to play the original Pong with another person? The new Pong is no exception, and competition can become fierce. The playfields are extremely varied, utilizing soccer fields, islands, jungles, and ice (featuring penguins that "fart out" multiballs when struck). Hey, we said the *game* had advanced, not the humor!

The folks at Hasbro have even seen fit to give some personality to the paddles. The chirping/squeaking/baby talking paddles may prove too cute for some, but for us it's a nice break from blowing appendages off wailing monsters.

Another creative touch is that as you advance through levels, your progress is tracked by filling an Atari fuji with color.

Unfortunately, Pong's one fault is also its most glaring. Controlling the paddle can be extremely difficult and can be quite taxing on one's patience. Trying to get your paddle lined up for that "edge shot" can be unbelievably frustrating, and missing the ball entirely is a bit too common. We improved after a bit of practice, but the precision of a paddle just isn't there. It's difficult to overlook this problem in an otherwise great game.

Currently, the Sony PlayStation lacks many family oriented 2-4 player games. Hasbro Interactive is helping fill that void with games such as this and The Next Tetris.

We like the direction Hasbro Interactive is taking with its Atari licenses and hope to see more games like Pong in the future. Although, one day I do look forward to removing some appendages from dragons in an "Adventure" remake.

Overall Rating: B+

Publisher: **Hasbro Interactive**
Developer: **Hasbro Interactive**
Release Date: **Now Available**

Road Rash 64

By Jeff Burke

Over the years, we have seen many incarnations of Road Rash, but this one seems to rise above the rest. This grueling multi-level motorcycle racing game is full of exciting action, from cops on bikes, to opponents beating you with various weapons, to avoiding getting knocked off your bike by surrounding traffic.

Road Rash 64 offers several racing options, including single player Thrash mode (choose a track, hop on your bike, and go!), Big Game mode (compete in races, gain cash by winning, progress to higher courses, and purchase better bikes), and Multi-player modes (compete against your friends in a variety of games). The wide assortment of weapons ranges from the normal (clubs) to the strange (pool cues), but they remain realistic; they're a friendly reminder to all players that these guys are out for blood! Those with pent up anger will enjoy punching, kicking, and utilizing the varied weapons to beat your opponent to a bloody pulp. The more weapons you get, the greater the fun! And the more beatings you dole out, the higher your score!

In the multi-player mode, choose from Thrash, Lap Races, Deathmatch, Ped Hunt, and Tag. Lap races are self-explanatory, Deathmatch involves causing other riders to crash, and Ped Hunt has you running over pedestrians. Tag is a twisted version of the playground game where someone is "it," and thus, deserves to be crashed into! The ability to compete with other people is a great addition to Road Rash 64 and keeps the entertainment value high. Who would've thought slamming your friend into a stop sign could be so much fun!

The game's major downfall is its graphics. Aside from the nice touch of being able to leave skid marks in your wake, the rest of the graphics are disappointing, as most of the riders have the same generic blockiness/blurriness. Use of the Expansion Pak spruces things up a bit, but not significantly. However, to make up for the less than impressive graphics, Road Rash 64 has terrific sounds, such as engines revving, cops' sirens, pedestrians' helpless cries, and various "fighting" noises. An edgy soundtrack rounds out the package.

Road Rash 64 is one of the best versions to date and worth the money. As a classic gamer, you might even appreciate the "game play over graphics" philosophy. Although hardcore gamers may find playing against the computer a bit too easy, Road Rash 64 is exciting, addicting, and can certainly be played in an entertainment emergency!

Overall Rating: B+

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Pacific Power & Light Co.
Release Date: Now available

lost Arcade Classic

Stratovox

by Kyle Snyder

When I was growing up, there was a quaint little country store about a mile from home called Maloney's. In addition to candy, milk, cigarettes, and trinkets, they featured two arcade games for their patrons to play. Most of the biggest hits cycled through this little place, PacMan, Ms.PacMan, Centipede, Asteroids, and Galaxian among them. Every now and again, however, games that weren't very well known or mainstream would show up. Games like Space Encounters, Omega Race, and Frenzy all took up residence there, in addition to a 1980 Taito title I've never seen anywhere else. . . STRATOVOX.

Stratovox was of the "slide-and-shoot" class of Space Invaders variant: use a two way joystick to control a left-right moving defense base at the bottom of the screen; use the lone fire button to launch missiles at attacking aliens. Yeah, been there, done that. Or have we?

The first thing you notice about the game is that the player's ship is actually moving on a planet surface - a large yellow (sometimes blue) arc of a planet, complete with craters! There is also a smaller "moon" on the right hand side of the screen, where once again, the edge of the planet is all that is visible. Never mind that two heavenly bodies so close to one another would rip each other apart with gravity. This is a video game, not physics 101!

Now, here's where it gets strange. On the moon, several soldiers are standing in a vertical line. They look much like the stock "man" graphic from the Odyssey 2 home systems. On the left, a small armada of flying saucers hovers out of reach of the player's weaponry. Every few seconds, the saucers peel out and attack the player with a cluster of missiles. They attack in small groups of three, or larger groups of five, with fancy loops similar to some of the aliens' movements in Galaga. Furthermore, these aliens have taken a shining to the soldiers on the moon and occasionally abduct one of the poor grunts.

The saucers carry the men horizontally along the very top of the screen (not too difficult a target if you can hit the mystery ship in Space Invaders with any reasonable accuracy). When you strike down a saucer carrying a soldier, the soldier is "saved" and magically reappears back on the moon. If the aliens carry a man back to their armada, he is lost forever. The game will also end if all three of your ships are lost to alien collision or firepower, or when all men are kidnapped.

Okay, so what's the big deal, you may be asking yourself. The big deal, is SPEECH! Despite popular myth, the first game with voices from within was not Midway's Gorf, Stern's Berzerk, or Sega's Space Fury. The soldiers say, "HELP ME!" when abducted by the aliens, "THANK YOU" when rescued by the player, and "LUCKY" at the end of a round when the remaining soldiers are added up for bonus points.

The result is a unique game with elements of various titles from the classic era and engaging, challenging gameplay.

Maloney's store closed about 10 years ago, survived for a few years afterwards as an antique shop, and now sits derelict. Whenever I visit Maryland and drive by, I can feel the rush of adrenalin I got when I'd play Stratovox, and I swear I can hear "HELP ME" echoing in the breeze. . .

CGM

Odds are, if you consider yourself a "Classic Gamer," you've seen the movie "Tron" 112.4 times. That number comes from the fact that we know you scan the movie to the "Space Paranoids" scene and then straight to when Flynn gets digitized and brought into the computer to meet the MCP himself. We don't have time to screw around! We have Lightcycle scenes to see, dammit!

Face it, this movie is the Classic Gamer's "Casablanca." It's the main reason you bought a DVD player.

You've also felt the consequences of openly declaring to "outsiders," "Yeah! Tron's a great flick!" then quickly retreating from their scowls to the safety of rec.games.video.classic on the Internet.

It's ok. You're among friends. We at Classic Gamer Magazine believe this movie and its actors stand out among the greats: Brando. . .De Niro. . .and that guy who played "Ram."

We know you devour Tron's videogame counterparts just as ravenously. So we've decided, in honor of this classic motion picture, to run down the great and not so great games this piece of art has spawned.

Prepare for De-Resolution!

Tron the Arcade Game

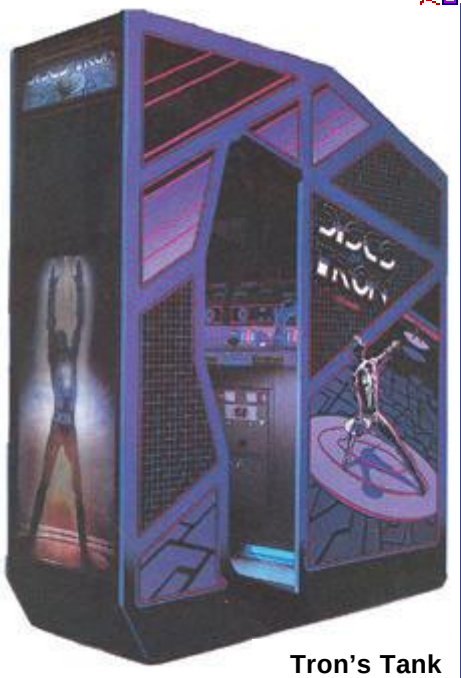
It's four! four! Four games in one! The first time you saw this glowing blue beauty in the arcade, you knew it was going to be a great game. It looked cool, so therefore it had to play cool. The joystick itself belongs in the Louvre!

After you deposited your quarter and pressed the single player button, you were then forced to choose between four directions onscreen. One choice was as good as the next, so you picked one and were then greeted by one of four games.

Enter Flashing Cone Before Time Expires

Aaaah!!! Bugs! Bugs!! This is probably the easiest of the games on the first level. Blast your way through rapidly reproducing Gridbugs to enter the flashing circle. This gets much tougher on later levels when you become literally surrounded by hundreds of Gridbugs. This would actually be a fairly blasé game if the bugs didn't look so impressive when they reproduced.

Overall Level Rating: B+



Tron's Tank

Try to Enter the MCP Cone

This is basically a good game of Breakout. To enter the MCP Cone, you need to create a path by shooting your way through rotating bricks that shield the top of the structure. This is easier said than done because the MCP Cone is slowly lowering down on you, creating a time limit. So break through quickly or get de-res'd.

Overall Level Rating: A

Destroy All Enemy Tanks

Guide your tank around a maze, dodging enemy tank fire while trying to unload three shots on your enemy. Everyone seemed to have their theories on this game. It was either hide in one place (usually near the warp tunnel), or stay on the run while blasting away like crazy. Ricocheting shots were often worth a lucky hit or two and saved me more than once. After playing this level, it became increasingly difficult to go home and face your "Combat" cartridge.

Overall Level Rating: B+

Avoid Hitting Light Traces and Walls

This was probably the main reason you kept feeding quarters into the machine. How else were you ever going to pilot a Lightcycle? It didn't seem to matter that this was just a graphically more complex game than "Surround." There was no arcade adrenaline rush better than defeating two opposing Lightcycles. Certainly a victorious moment to savor!

Overall Level Rating: A+

Overall Tron Arcade Game Rating: A+

Discs of Tron

It's not often you get to step inside an arcade game cabinet. It's also not often an arcade game inspires you to go outside and hurl Frisbees with great force at your fellow man. Discs of Tron is such a game!

The Arcade cabinet is more like a booth, which allows you to step inside to battle against Tron's enemy, Sark. Inside you'll find a dim environment with a cushy carpeted back support, which makes for comfortable standing. Stereo surround speakers and an energy disc on the floor complete the experience.

The game is reminiscent of the scene in the movie where Tron is defending himself against an onslaught of flying discs while returning the favor to his adversaries. This time the object of the game is to de-rezz Sark by hitting him twice with one of your discs. Doing so advances you to the next level.

The 3-D perspective the screen gives and the sound of Sark laughing after he de-rezzes you are the crowning touches to a perfect game.

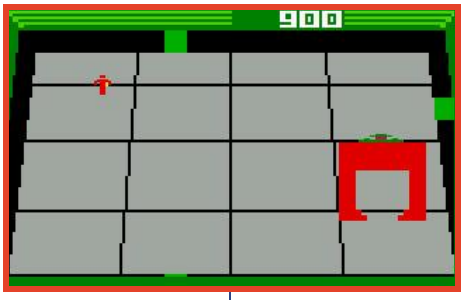
Overall Rating: A+

Tron Hits Home

Although the movie bombed at the box office, the games were a big hit in the arcades. The next step in arcade evolution is to bring the games home for the consoles.

The original Tron arcade game never made it to the console scene. It was just too complex to do so - even for the mighty Intellivision. Mattel was

sorely lacking any big name licensing agreements for the Intellivision and hedged their bets on Tron. The results were often less than spectacular, but there are a few diamonds in the bunch.



Tron Deadly Discs - Intellivision

Tron Deadly Discs
Intellivision

This game is styled after the arcade game "Discs of Tron." You play the role of the hero, Tron, and run (constantly running!) around an arena trying to kill opposing warriors with your Deadly Disc. The idea is to not stay in one place for very long and have great aim while running and firing at the same time.

This game receives bonus marks for featuring a "Recognizer" from the movie, which you can destroy with a well placed shot.

Overall Score: B+

Tron Deadly Discs
Atari 2600

Mattel ported their Intellivision hit by the same name over to the Atari, but the results were less than spectacular.

The idea is the same. Move Tron around an arena, flinging your Frisbees at the warriors who are trying to do the same to you. On this version, however, the graphics aren't anything to write home about. To be honest it looks more like the guys from Mattel's Baseball game are flinging bars of soap at one another inside the locker room after the big game. However, the onscreen action is controlled much better with an Atari joystick than the always difficult Intellivision disc controller.

Overall Score: C

Tron Deadly Discs - Atari 2600

Adventures of
Tron
Atari 2600

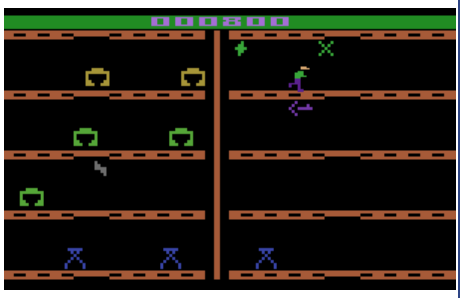
This time take Tron and keep him running around four stories of platforms (bisected by the I/O Tower) while being chased by the MCP's lackeys.

This is a largely forgettable game that has you continually going up and down elevators and collecting bits of data while avoiding grid bugs, Recognizers, and enemy tanks. You also get to hop a ride on a Solar Sailor, which resembles the sword in Adventure.

I also noticed this game recycles a ridiculous amount of sound effects from Activision's Megamania.

The game scores a few bonus points, however, for having a unique (for the time) title screen.

Overall Score: C



Adventures of Tron - Atari 2600

Tron Maze-a-Tron
Intellivision

Instead of Tron, this time you get to be Flynn, the human who has been digitized to microscopic size and brought into the computer.

This is a mildly fun game which consists of two levels. In the first, find your way through a maze of circuit boards while fending off Recognizers. In the second level, you meet face to face with the MCP and must match a series of ones and zeroes in order to destroy him.

Impressive graphics, especially in regards to the MCP.

Overall Score: B+

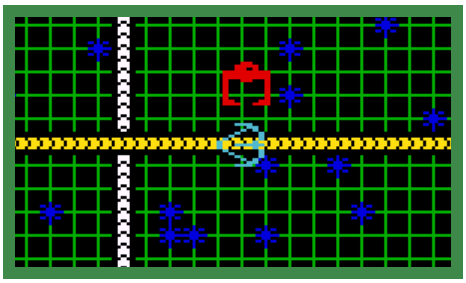
Tron Solar Sailor
Intellivision

In Tron Solar Sailor, you play Flynn again and must drive your digital motorhome through the computer in an attempt to locate the MCP and destroy him.

This game requires the Intellivoice attachment, so don't even bother trying to play without it; you won't have a clue where to go, nor will you know the code to destroy the MCP. The usual band of bad guys are in your way, including Recognizers and tanks.

The graphics are a tad on the bland side for the Intellivision and are "blockier" than usual.

Overall Score: C-



Tron Solar Sailor - Intellivision

Tron 2?

Rumors abound regarding a proposed sequel to Tron. One rumor predicts it being a remake of the original, and another foresees it involving kids who are transported inside the computer. Both of these rumors involve Pixar Studios, who vehemently deny any involvement and are supposedly having a good chuckle over the whole thing.

Another rumored project is a television show entitled "Warriors of Tron," which apparently would be produced as a weekly series. This concept is scary because it sounds like it could be created in the spirit of the Power Rangers, which would be an awful thing for the Tron faithful.

The bonus is that even if the movie or TV show bombs, we'll be guaranteed some great videogames!

CGM

Pac-Man in Tron The Movie?

Want to see our favorite dot-eater make an appearance in our favorite movie? If you have the DVD version, it's quite simple to do.

Go to Chapter 13 (lightcycle scene) and go to the time of 0:45:20

Look on the game grid, which Sark is viewing. Voila'. . .It's Pac!

DUMBO'S FLYING CIRCUS™

A prototype for the Atari 2600

By Kyle Snyder

What happens when you take elements of the arcade classics Joust, Defender, and Kickman, toss in some Disney magic, a clever control scheme, and engaging game play? You get a delightful cocktail known as Dumbo's Flying Circus for the Atari 2600. This was intended to be another of the Disney/Atari series of cartridges that began with Sorcerer's Apprentice, and continued with Donald's Speedboat Race.

Unfortunately, due to the crash of '83 - '84, neither Dumbo nor Donald ever saw their games progress beyond prototype status. This is a shame as Dumbo's Flying Circus is an excellent game that would've sold quite well given a chance.

The scenario involves Dumbo flying around underneath the big top catching or popping balloons. The player maneuvers the pachyderm with the joystick, controlling his direction in the conventional manner, and using "up" to flap his ears for lift. He flies rather similarly to the ostriches in Joust and the momentum is comparable. Balloons rise from the floor, which Dumbo can catch by colliding with them, or can pop by firing a well-timed peanut from his trunk.

The flies in the ointment here are some strange multi-colored pulsating things that rise at the same speed as the balloons. They slowly home in on Dumbo, and if the hapless cutie collides with them, it's curtains in the big top. Additionally, if an "evil balloon" is permitted to reach the top of the screen, a tightrope will descend one level, restricting Dumbo's flying area. All is not lost, however, as these evil balloons can be destroyed with a peanut shot.

Beginning on the second screen, various clowns appear, making their ascension to the tightrope by holding onto balloons. Borrowing from the landers, humans, and mutants in Defender, when the clowns are being carried to the top, they are harmless and need to be rescued. Once they get past the tightrope, they begin to ride a unicycle back and forth while tossing projectiles of some sort at poor Dumbo. The message here? SAVE THE CLOWNS, AND DON'T PISS THEM OFF!! As in the famous human rescuing procedure, Dumbo can shoot the balloon holding the clown, then swoop beneath to catch him for points. If the clown falls to the ground however, no penalty is incurred.

A bonus round comes every few screens involving something red (I think it's a hat, but my friend Alan claims it's Dumbo's little mouse friend). Whatever it is, it gets flung from one side of the screen and speeds over to the other side. Your goal is to catch it, which results in bonus points and the playing of a cutesy little tune.

The game play speeds up considerably in later rounds, so much so that you will find yourself crowded by a quickly lowering tightrope, smothered by the "evil balloons," and pelted by the angry clowns atop the tightrope.

This game is not for the claustrophobic! But for the rest of us, Dumbo's Flying Circus does not disappoint. Too bad Atari didn't release this to stores, but at least the game is available from several internet sites as a copied cartridge. If you can afford it, be sure to grab this one!

Screenshots Courtesy www.atarihq.com

CGM

ALIEN

For the Atari 2600

By Kyle Snyder

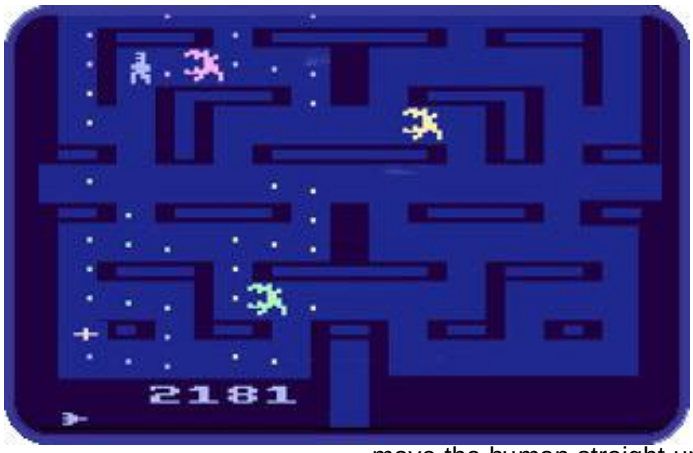
Being a fan of horror and sci-fi, I remember being rather excited to see a video game version of the claustrophobic cinematic masterpiece, Alien.

It must be a fantastic and frenetic shoot-em-up, I thought. Probably one of those three-dimensional type games like CBS' Tunnel Runner or Starpath's Escape from the Mindmaster. Only a game of that style could hope to capture such a great film experience.

Plug in the cartridge and you get. . . PAC-MAN ?!?!?!?!?

Yes, the programmers at 20th Century Fox wanted their own piece of the maze game pie, so they created what turned out to be ALIEN: A Pac Man type game that was better than Atari's own licensed version of the arcade classic. And in an effort, no doubt to stave off the lawsuit hungry lawyers at Atari, several essences of game play have been tweaked, and a bizarre bonus round keeps this from being an outright clone.

The player controls a person (Lt. Ripley?) running through the maze-like corridors of the spaceship Nostromo, crushing alien eggs for points. One by one, Aliens emerge from a door at the bottom of the screen (up to three per maze) to pursue the hapless human. The human can grab sparkling stars to temporarily turn the tables on the aliens, at which point they turn blue and flee and are worth increasingly higher points when caught and destroyed. Aliens that are destroyed are soon regenerated and wander back into play from the same door at the bottom of the screen. Periodically, bonus prizes appear in the center of the maze and are worth extra points when snagged. Finally, a secret tunnel on either side of the screen allows both human and aliens to leave one side of the maze and emerge on the other. Sounds just like a re-write of Pac Man, right? Well, those are the similarities. The differences are what make the game noteworthy.



First, the sparkling stars (energizers) appear only ONE AT A TIME. This makes for more strategic game play and discourages running for a quick power up. Second, the player has a WEAPON. Pressing the fire button causes a flame thrower, YES, A FLAME THROWER, to activate in front of the player. When the flame thrower is activated, the aliens reverse direction, or in some rare cases, stop moving for several seconds. One can see how this would be advantageous.

"Feed Me!"

Next, the prizes are not cute little cherries and strawberries but astronomical shapes like rockets, space ships, and Saturns. (The planet, not the car!)

Finally, we come to the bonus round. The bonus round is much like Activison's Freeway, with much less margin for error. You move the human straight up the center of the screen (you don't even have the option of moving left to right) through a stampeding "herd" of aliens. The goal at the top of the screen is a bonus prize. Grab it within eight seconds and you win the points. Run out of time or get munched by an alien and you return to the maze screen. You don't lose a human if you die on the bonus round, you just return a little humbled, perhaps.

It's interesting that certain touches are so much closer to their arcade inspiration than Atari's version. For instance, the color of the maze walls are blue, just like the arcade Pac Man. The sound of the egg crushing is VERY CLOSE to the original dot munching sound effect and the background siren is present, as well.

The ads for this cartridge provided a take off on the original movie's tag line, "In your living room, no one can hear you scream." But when I play Alien, I find a good solid challenge, clever graphics, and excellent sound. In short, a screaming good time!

CGM

GHOSTBUSTERS™

By Skyler Miller

This year marks the 15th anniversary of *Ghostbusters*, the 1984 hit comedy starring Bill Murray, Dan Akroyd, Harold Ramis, and Ernie Hudson. Directed by Ivan Reitman and written by Akroyd and Ramis, the movie grossed almost $240 million in the U.S., spawning a sequel, two television cartoons, and a variety of video games on several platforms.

The video games are what we're most interested in here, naturally. The first *Ghostbusters* based game arrived on just about every home console and computer known to man. Designed by David Crane, the extraordinary programmer also responsible for *Pitfall!*, *Ghostbusters* was distinctive due to its business simulation elements and multi-objective game play.

The version most people are familiar with is the Commodore 64 adaptation. After the game finishes loading (which takes forever on the 1541 disk drive), you are immediately treated to a demented-sounding voice yelling, "Ghostbusters! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" followed by the familiar *Ghostbusters* theme song. Then a little ball appears and bounces on top of the lyrics in time with the music (Pressing F1 or F3 begins the game).

Next, you are asked to enter your name and an account number, if you have

NES Title Screen

one. Once this information is entered, you are presented with a loan of $10,000 to spend on a new Ghostbusters franchise. There are four cars and a selection of equipment to choose from including traps, ghost vacuums, marshmallow detectors, and ghost bait, to name a few.

With your car packed and ready, it's time to hit the streets of New York. The actual game play is broken down into three elements: navigating the city map, driving, and ghostbusting. The city map is where you'll spend most of your time. Here, you see a complete layout of the city, which consists of buildings, the "Zuul" building, and the Ghostbusters headquarters.

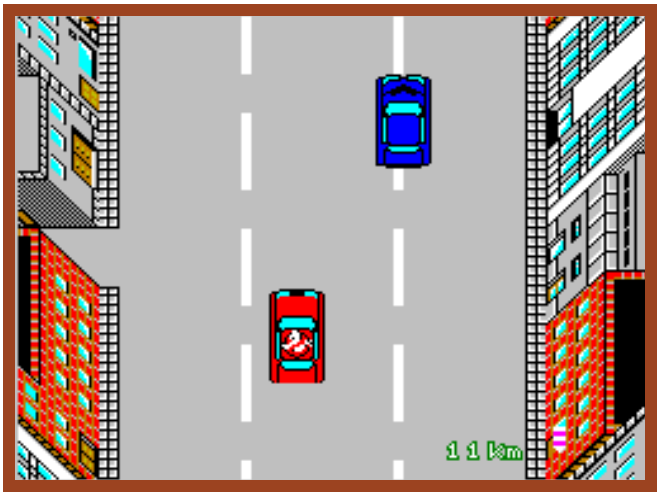
A flashing red building is the signal for a ghost call. After moving to the flashing building, you change into driving mode; the more expensive your car, the faster you'll get to your destination. Then it's time to set up the trap, coax the ghost into position with your proton beams, and grab the ugly spud.

If he gets away, one of your men will be knocked over, and you'll hear the familiar phrase, "He slimed me!" If you run out of traps or two of your Ghostbusters get slimed, you must return to headquarters.

Each caught ghost earns you a certain amount of money depending on how fast you respond. The objective is to earn back more money than you started with before the city's PK level (the ghost's emissions) reaches 10,000. If you fail, the game ends. If you achieve your goal, you are allowed to enter the Zuul building, where you must get two Ghostbusters past the Marshmallow Man. If you do that, you win the game, are rewarded with extra cash, and given an account number, which may be used to continue the game at a

Atari 2600

Sega Genesis



Sega Master System

later time.

As far as movie adaptations go, *Ghostbusters* is one of the best. It successfully captures the key elements of the movie and packages them into a fun, innovative game. Although the game play can get monotonous after a while, the drive to buy better cars with more equipment keeps things fresh.

As far as differences between the versions go, all retain the same basic game play elements, but the complexity of the game and the quality of visuals and sound varies from system to system. For example, the Atari 2600 version has only one car with fewer options to choose from and is less graphically pleasing for obvious technical reasons. Still, it remains one of the more complex games for the system.

On the other hand, the SMS version adds more options and better graphics but is missing the C64's voices. There are still only four cars to choose from, but there is a much larger selection of equipment. The driving sequence is also more complicated, as you now have to dodge cars and roadblocks on the way to your destination. In addition, after you make it past the Marshmallow Man, there are two extra levels. In the first, you have to fight your way up to the top of the building; in the second, you go one-on-one against Gozer. Besides being impossibly difficult, these extra levels add very little in the way of entertainment value.

All in all, the game was released for the Amstrad CPC, Atari 800, Atari 2600, Apple II, AtariXE, Commodore 64, Colecovision, MSX Nintendo Entertainment System, PC Jr., and Sega Master System.

But the story doesn't end there. In 1990, Sega released a side-scrolling *Ghostbusters* game for its Genesis console, but this one was related to the previous releases. You can choose to be Peter, Ray or Egon (but no Winston – he was always left out, don't ya think?). The object is to make your way through four different houses, clearing them of ghosts and collecting the pieces of a stone tablet. The game's graphics are distinctly Japanese, with super deformed-style characters and strange looking ghosts.

Other *Ghostbusters*-related releases include *The Real Ghostbusters*, an arcade shooter, and an unrelated title of the same name for the Game Boy (a forgettable action-puzzler). Two separate games based on the 1989 movie *Ghostbusters II* were released for the NES and Game Boy. The NES game is your basic platform shooter with decent graphics and impossible game play. The Game Boy game, on the other hand, is very good, featuring all four Ghostbusters and unique, addictive game play. You move two Ghostbusters (one with a proton pack, one with a trap) through a series of rooms, blasting and trapping ghosts. A certain number of ghosts must be busted before you can move on to the next level.

Since 1990, there have been no new *Ghostbusters* games for the obvious reason that there has not been a new movie. Rumors of a *Ghostbusters III* have been circulating for years, but whether or not it ever happens remains to be seen. If it does, however, you can bet that we'll see some video games to accompany it.

CGM

Atari 2600 At the Movies

Revenge of the Beefsteak Tomatoes

Remember that terrible movie "Attack of the Killer Tomatoes"? Sure it was stupid but it was funny, too! In case you just couldn't live without a videogame sequel to that masterpiece, you're in luck!

20th Century Fox flexed its marketing muscle and dipped into its huge film vault for video game licensing ideas and came up with. . .Revenge of the Beefsteak Tomatoes? I realize they gave up the video game rights to "Star Wars," but come on!

Surprisingly, "Revenge" has some very original components to it. The object is to build 3 brick walls with your bug sprayer over the constantly moving and shooting tomato plants. While dodging their fire, you must also avoid giant attacking tomatoes and the smaller cherry tomato bombs.

Hint: Build your walls from the bottom up.

Overall Rating: B

Mega Force

Mega Force is based on the box office flop of the same name. The movie was bad. I mean really, really bad. I also highly recommend it because it's just *that* awful. Surprisingly, the game is pretty good! This amazes me because bad movies usually spawn really bad merchandising.

Basic premise: Man your Moto Fighter (a flying motorcycle) through the desert, and defend your city against various attackers while launching a counterattack on the enemy's city. Since your Moto Fighter gets really lousy gas mileage (you lose one gallon per second), you need to refuel by shooting the fuel tanks along the way. What really makes this game fun is that you can blow up *EVERYTHING*! - Lakes, trees, and even your own city (and you get points for doing that!).

Overall Rating: B+

King Kong

Rescue the maiden in distress from a giant ape atop a series of levels connected by ladders. The player must ascend the ladders while avoiding projectiles that are rolling towards him.

Donkey Kong rip-off? You betcha! And a bad one at that! Tigervision licensed King Kong from Universal but failed to utilize the property to its full potential.

When I think of the Big Ape, I envision him at the top of the Empire State Building with airplanes buzzing like flies around his head. It certainly would have been more interesting to fly a plane, trying to bring King Kong into a swan dive to the concrete below. And to think this game was licensed from the company that sued Nintendo (and lost) for ripping off Donkey Kong from them.

Overall Rating: F

Atari 2600
At the Movies

Raiders of the Lost Ark

I recall experiencing a feverous anticipation when it was first announced that Atari would release a game based on the famous whip-toting hero.

I think what I expected to get, and what I finally got were two different things. I always appreciated that Atari took some time with this license in order to make it something unique, rather than rushing it for a quick buck. What I had expected it to be involved Indy running away from giant boulders and gathering treasures to get a high score. Little did I expect that programmer Howard Scott Warshaw would create a fairly complex game in which you guided a funny moving Indiana through a huge quest to locate the Ark of the Covenant. A lot of territory gets covered for a 2600 game!

Although it could be rather frustrating at times (falling off cliffs, using two joysticks), I think a new benchmark was set for future adventure games.

Overall Rating: A-

E.T.

You either love or hate E.T. for the Atari 2600. In 1982, Howard Scott Warshaw accepted the task to complete E.T. in just six weeks, in order for it to be on shelves for Christmas. This was a monumental task even by 1982's standards. So, if the game looks a little rushed, now you know the reason.

The object of the game is to see how many times you can make your little green alien fall into the pits scattered around various screens. Ok, not really. Actually, you're supposed to locate the parts of a phone, which have been scattered about several screens. Once you find them, E.T. will "phone home," which sends a message to his homeworld asking them to send a medical transport because he's broken his legs falling into the pits so many times.

This game sold over one million copies, but unfortunately over five million copies were created. Ironically, most of the other copies reportedly ended up in a concrete landfill in a New Mexican desert.

Overall Rating: C

Fantastic Voyage

You and your submarine have been injected into the bloodstream of a dying man. Your mission is to destroy the bacteria and make your way to your evil nemesis "The Blood Clot" (>boo< >hiss<) before your patient flatlines

This 20th Century Fox game is largely forgettable and quite boring, which is too bad because the title alone makes you think you're going to get something really great. "Strap in, kids! This is not going to be a 'Mediocre Voyage' by any means!" 'Fantastic,' it ain't.

Overall Rating: D

Atari 2600 At the Movies

Flash Gordon

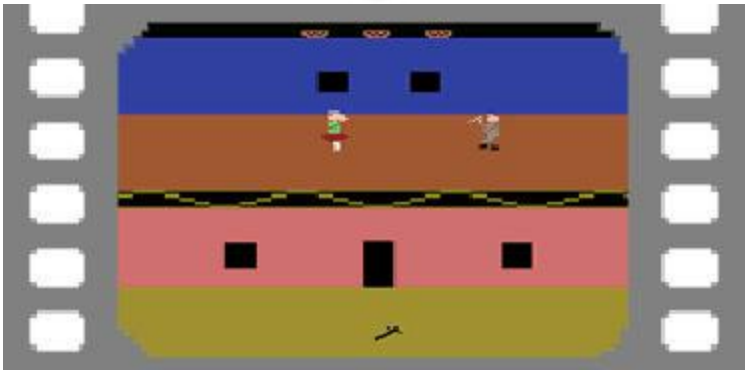
While not as bad as the 1980 film which inspired it, Flash Gordon is still some pretty bland stuff. Fly your ship through Spider City (which is a series of tunnels) and rescue the spacemen who are missing.

This game was created in the vain of Defender. Many similar elements are present, such as the side-scrolling movement of your ship, almost identical enemies, and rescuing people by hitting them with your spaceship.

The only unique feature in the game is the map on the lower half of the screen, which lets you know where in the tunnel you are, as well as where the enemies and missing spacemen are located. The difficult part is trying to keep your eye on the map at the same time you are trying to get through the tunnels. However, there isn't any bad Queen music, which is a bonus, naturally.

Overall Rating: C+

Halloween



Halloween was reviewed in our last issue as a game "that goes bump in the night." This is the game that made parents nuts because of its "graphic nature." I suppose it was fairly gruesome for the time. Although, the sight of blood gushing from the decapitated babysitter's neck is probably more hilarious than grotesque.

The idea is to play the role of a babysitter and protect the children in a two story dwelling from the homicidal Michael Myers. Good ol' Mike follows you around, accompanied by his theme song (I gotta get me one of those) while making stabbing motions with his knife.

It's a colorful game with rich, vibrant, spurting reds and lovely brown and olive shag carpeting. Impressive music, too!

Overall Rating: B

Gremlins

Awww! How cute! A Gremlins game! Well, in name anyway. It's really just a bad Kaboom! clone with a bonus round thrown in for good measure.

The object is to maneuver your man on the bottom of the screen to catch the cute Gremlins falling from the sky. If you miss one, the Gremlin will eat what appears to be a hamburger (In case you didn't know, you should never feed a Gremlin after midnight). If he eats the Whopper in question, he will turn into one of those bad Gremlins who smoke cigars, make themselves at home, and monopolize the television remote.

Once the level is cleared, you go to the next round and try to destroy the bad Gremlins you just created. Only if they included risqué photos of Phoebe Cates would this game be worth it.

Overall Rating: D

Atari 2600
At the Movies

M*A*S*H

Join the zany antics of the gang from the 4077th M*A*S*H, as they fly helicopters and rescue wounded from the battlefield while avoiding artillery fire!

Ok, I admit this game has very little to do with either the movie or television show of the same name, but it's not too bad either. In one of the games, you race your helicopter against another in a bid to pick up the wounded.

Another option has you rescuing paratroopers before they get blown to meaty bits (similar in style to Kaboom!). The third game lets you play doctor by giving you the chance to remove shrapnel from a patient who, graphics wise, appears to have more severe problems than that. This will remind you heavily of the board game you played as a kid - "Operation." Come to think of it, that guy was quite disturbing looking, as well.

Overall Rating: B-

Porky's

First off, and this is important, there are no graphically nude high school girls in locker room showers located anywhere within the game. There is a pathetic attempt at one, but don't get excited about it.

Second, don't attempt to play this game without the instructions. You'll either just sit in frustration saying, "what the hell?" or worse, you'll give up and go watch the movie that inspired it instead.

Ok, now if you still want to play the game, the object is to run across a highway and then blow up Porky's Bar. The part that makes no sense is that if you get hit by a car on the highway, you get knocked into a swamp. The only way out is to use the pole vault and collect four bricks in order to build a ladder. This is extremely time consuming, and the problem will almost certainly resurface the next time you try to cross the highway.

You'll find that the instruction manual is far more entertaining as it contains sexual overtones, which have nothing to do with the game. So, "latch on" to it.

Overall Rating: C -

Texas Chainsaw Massacre

This is a groundbreaking parent "freak out" game brought to you by the fine folks at Wizard. Not only is the game violent like its sister game, "Halloween," but this time you get to play the bad guy, Leatherface.

Just because it's based on the movie of the same name, don't be fooled into thinking it's good. In fact, it's quite poor. Take Leatherface on a countryside run to enjoy the fresh air while he rips people to shreds with his chainsaw. You may as well take a chainsaw to your money if you buy this game.

Overall Rating: D

CLASSIC GAMING VIDEO SHELF

"Joysticks"

Review by Kyle Snyder

One of the things the 80s was infamous for was the glut of teen sex comedies across the movie screens of America. This trend began in 1978 with "Animal House," and continued with films such as 1981's "Porky's" and 1984's "Revenge of the Nerds." Now, for each of these well written classics, there were at least ten poorly written, cheesy attempts at the genre that went straight to video or cable TV. Remember "Malibu Bikini Shop" or "Spring Break"? Of course you don't. You probably don't remember "Joysticks" either.

"Joysticks" opened in the summer of 1982 with tepid box office sales and has since been slumming around the wee morning hours of non-network TV, and USA's "UP All Night."

The story has some promise. An influential businessman wants to shut down the local game room, claiming video games contribute to the immorality and poisoning of our youth. The teens fight back in town hall, bringing forth photos of the businessman involved in questionable acts, and eventually everything gets settled. The kids win. The arcade stays open.

There are a few likeable characters, such as Eugene, the kind-hearted nerd who endures a few humiliating pranks in the first few minutes but later becomes an integral part of the gang. There is also Patsy, the sweet valley girl, who is cursed to be the daughter of the businessman, Joseph Rutter. And for all his disgusting slobbishness, "Dorfus" is this movie's John Belushi.

However, most of the characters personify horrible clichés, such as the studly guy who manages the arcade, yet has a bizarre phobia about actually playing the games. Then there are the two idiot cousins who carry out all of Mr.Rutter's dirty work. They make Darryl and Darryl from "Newhart" appear Shakespearian by comparison! And the worst character, by far, is King Vidiot, an 80's punk to the Nth degree who has four mindless drone gals constantly following him around. King Vidiot enters into a deal with Rutter to defeat the best player at the arcade and win a real arcade game of his own. Of course, K.V. loses. Would you have it any other way?

Now for the most important critique, historical accuracy. The arcade looks exactly like one of those little game rooms that sprouted up in parking lots everywhere, complete with neon lights, dark walls, and rotating stoplights. It has a small snack bar, and nearly every popular game was present. Pac Man, Defender, Asteroids, Centipede, and Gorf are all very visible in the background, and even some dark horse hits like Carnival and Zarzon can be seen. The most interesting game has to be the maze chase game shown in the back room of the arcade. The manager engages in a game of "strip video" with two of the more annoying female patrons, and of course the girls lose. Would you have it any other way? The game used in this scene is an obscure Japanese import (look at the goofy cabinet) called "Streaking," where the object appears to be to shed clothes while avoiding the police, and eating dots. (Hmmmmmmm. . .)

On a scale of one to five, I'd rate this a 2. It's excellent if you want a trip down memory lane to the arcades of yesteryear, but if you're looking for good writing and acting, look elsewhere. I'd recommend "Ghostbusters"!

"The Wizard"

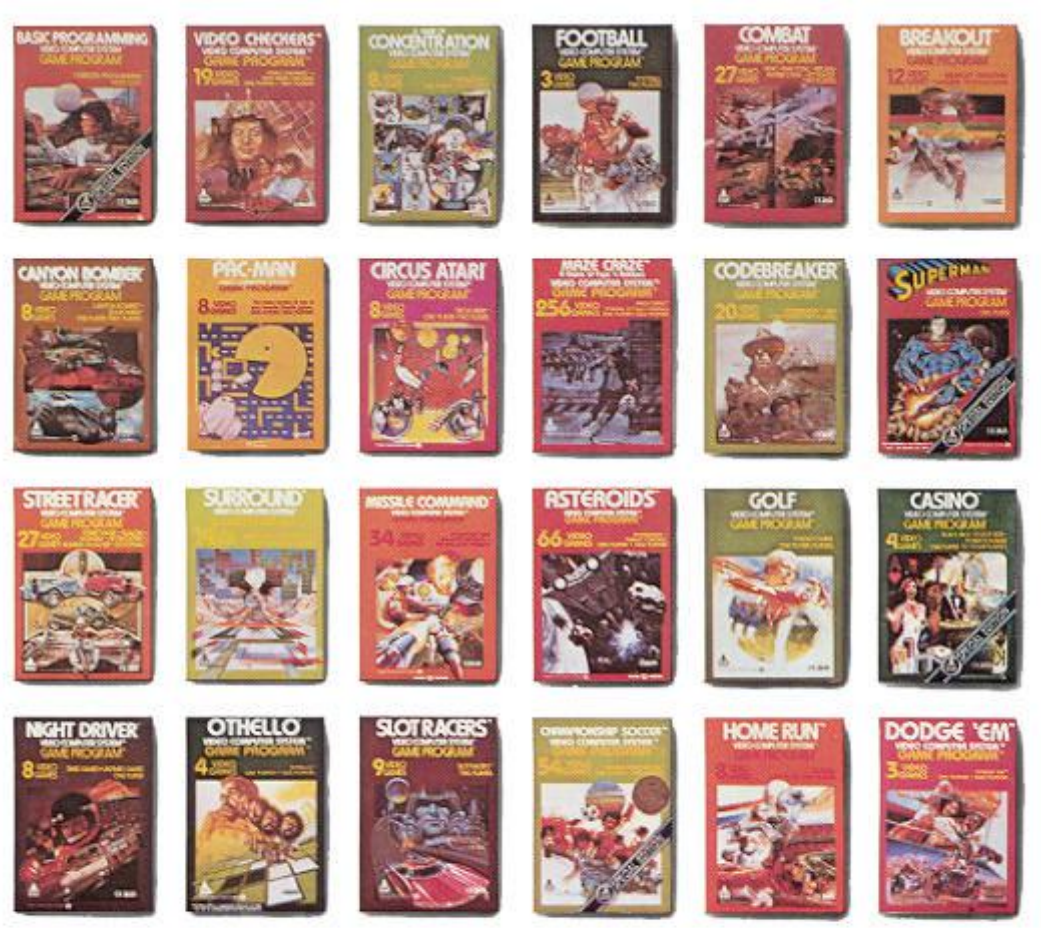
Review by Chris Cavanaugh

I'm under the impression that this movie was not made for an audience of 32-year-olds. I never saw it when it was originally released, although I doubt it was made for 22 year olds either.

If you enjoy watching two-hour Nintendo commercials, then this movie might be your cup of tea. You definitely have to hand it to Nintendo. This flick was basically one giant NES advertisement (consoles, games and peripherals!). Universal, recognizing a good thing when they see it, decides to cash in on this ploy by promoting its studio tour as well. These aren't subtle ads, folks. These are point blank, punch you in the nose and kick you in your joystick sales proclamations.

There is somewhat of a plot involving Corey (Fred Savage) taking his partially autistic half-brother, Jimmy, out of a Utah institution to go on a trek to California. It seems

Classic Advertisement



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1983

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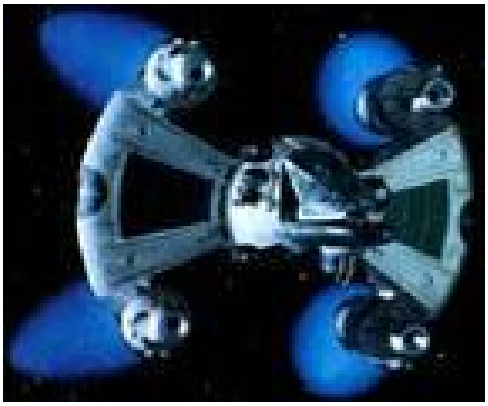
Jimmy just keeps saying the word "California" over and over, so Corey decides, "What the hell!" and they hop aboard a Wonder Bread truck bound west. As luck would have it, Jimmy is a real wiz at playing video games and while at a truck stop, he proceeds to score 50,000 on Double Dragon (managing to do this on what appears to be the second level). A young girl by the name of Haley recognizes this as true talent and encourages Corey to take Jimmy to the video game championships in Los Angeles. To raise the money to get to L.A., Corey and Haley use Jimmy's gaming talents to challenge all takers at various arcades. This is how they meet "Lucas," the bad boy of video gaming, who proceeds to humiliate Corey with his "Powerglove." Lucas also delivers the best-worst line of the movie, "I love the Powerglove. It's so bad!"

Basically the movie is "Rain Man" meets "The Color of Money" meets "The Rugrats."

The film also includes your standard bumbling, inept adults trying to track them down, and not one of them has a hint of intelligence. There is also an odd scene played for laughs where Haley accuses one of the adults of child molestation. Ha ha! Get it? And, I'll give a dollar to the first person who can tell me the point of Christian Slater's character.



The finale takes place at the videogame championship, coincidentally enough at Universal Studios. After Jimmy wins the semi-finals, the aforementioned idiot adults pursue the kids inside the theme park. This allows for perfect placement for Universal to promote the new at the time, "King Kong" attraction. If only the 40-foot ape hurled barrels at the kids would this have made a perfect promotion. What it does do, however, is provide a dramatic backstage entrance for Jimmy to participate in the finals against his foreshadowed nemesis, Lucas. Here, Nintendo gets a crack at another plug, as the game to be played for the final match-up is the soon-to-be-released Super Mario Bros. 3. It's simply amazing that these kids know how to play this game and uncover its many secrets without ever having played it before.

Well, I hate to give the ending away, but I'm sure you can manage a guess. I can't say I'd recommend you see this movie to prove yourself correct, either, but at worst catch it on cable and have a chuckle or two at its ridiculousness. I love The Wizard. It's so bad!

"Tilt"

Here's another bad film made in the spirit of "The Hustler." Brooke Shields plays teenage runaway "Tilt," a pinball virtuoso who wins money by wandering the country and challenging others to pinball. She even hangs out at a bar in hopes of scoring money. No, I'm not sure why a 12 year old girl is allowed to hang out in a bar, but that's the least of this film's problems.

There is a muddled plot that involves Tilt giving her winnings to a really bad singer, so he can make an equally bad demo for some poor, unsuspecting record company. This is another film in the "so bad it's good" category. By all means check it out when it's aired on cable.

"The Last Starfighter"

"The Last Starfighter" is another movie that belongs in every 80's geek's film library (the other being "Tron"). Lance Guest plays Alex Rogan, a typical teenager living in a trailer park with his mom and brother. Alex desperately wants to do something with his life beyond being the fix-it boy for the trailer park population.

Fate intervenes in the form of an arcade game entitled "Starfighter," which Alex has become quite skilled at playing. As it turns out, the game is actually a tool used to recruit Starfighters to fight against an evil empire in a distant galaxy. Alex then becomes the reluctant hero who must take on Xur and the Kodan armada.

This movie bombed terribly at the box office but has become somewhat of a cult classic. Granted the plot is somewhat weak and some of the characters are a bit cardboard, but the film maintains a good, fun energy from start to finish. Two notable performances include Robert Preston as Centauri, the fast talking galactic recruiter, and Dan O' Herlihy as Grig, Alex's loyal co-pilot.

"The Last Starfighter" has recently been released on DVD and includes bonus features such as widescreen, director's commentary, production photos and notes, and the original trailer.

It's interesting to note that no models were used in creating the special effects. "The Last Starfighter" was the first film to utilize CGI technology (created on a Cray computer) on a large scale. The special effects team claims the visuals would have been much grander had they not been constrained by the clock due to the time consuming process of rendering the graphics

If you've never seen this movie, do yourself a favor and at least give it a rent. We think "You're gonna love it. . .Love it!"

CGM

Howard's Revenge

We chat with “E.T.” and “Raiders of the Lost Ark” programmer, Howard Scott Warshaw, about life at Atari, his programming efforts, and his latest crusade.

By Darrin Powell

In 1982, a daring archeologist named Indiana Jones was thrilling movie audiences across the country as he battled poisonous snakes, runaway boulders, and ruthless Nazis in a fast-paced adventure film called "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

Meanwhile, at the offices of the nation's hottest video game company, programmer Howard Scott Warshaw was busy terrorizing his co-workers with a bullwhip.

"I had a 10-foot bullwhip that I got while doing Raiders of the Lost Ark, so I could get into character," Warshaw says, his voice filled with conspiratorial glee. "When I'd take breaks, I'd go around the hallways, sneak up behind people and crack the whip. It was really loud. Like a gunshot."

As the man who programmed both Raiders of the Lost Ark and E.T. for the Atari 2600, Warshaw holds a special place in the history of movie-related video games. You'd be hard pressed to find two titles that better represent the highs and lows of Hollywood's early-'80s flirtation with the fledgling video game industry.

Raiders of the Lost Ark was released in 1982. A complex quest with lots of rooms to explore and puzzles to solve, Raiders pushed the envelope for adventure games on the Atari 2600. It was a critical and commercial success.

E.T. was released in 1983. A monumental programming effort, it sold millions of copies but went on to become one of the most maligned titles in the Atari catalog.

Howard deals up anecdotes in “Once Upon Atari”

"People hated it," Warshaw says, laughing. "There's that story about Atari burying a bunch of them in Arizona. But I have no personal knowledge about that. Lots of people tell me the story, but I've never seen any pictures. I've never been there myself."

That's bad news for collectors who harbor dreams of leading an Indiana Jones-like expedition into the desert to search for a hidden cache of long-lost "E.T." carts. But Warshaw still has plenty of interesting stories about those early attempts at synergy between Hollywood and Silicon Valley.

Freaks and Geeks

Future programmer and prankster Howard Scott Warshaw was born in New Jersey and educated in New Orleans. At the dawn of the 1980s, he was working as a programmer at Hewlett-Packard -- and hating it.

"I was really bored at HP," he says. "And I was something of a zoo case. But a guy I was working with, his wife worked at Atari. She thought I'd fit in. So I went and applied for a job there."

At Atari, Warshaw found himself in a free-wheeling environment that was miles away from the buttoned-down world of Hewlett-Packard.

People smoked marijuana in the office. Programmers worked all hours of the day and night. Games weren't just a job. They were a way of life.

"We were always making up games," Warshaw says. "And not just video games. Any kind of game. We'd play bocci with lemons in the hallway. We'd pitch pennies. We'd play poker. Anything we did was pretty much games."

Warshaw says the management at Atari tolerated the wild behavior. "The security department had orders to keep the police away from us," he says. "It was a lot like being a rock star, but without the exposure. We got a lot of money, had total creative freedom and total behavioral freedom -- as long as we kept the games coming out."

Not everybody could handle the pressure. Some people, Warshaw says, literally cracked under the strain.

"People got carted away to mental hospitals," he says. "That happened a couple of times. You were one person working on a project that the company is spending tens of millions of dollars on. And you're the sole focus of responsibility."

But there was also the satisfaction of knowing you were working on the cutting edge of a popular new technology. The programmers at Atari were doing things with the 2600 that its creators had never envisioned.

"It was very much like ground breaking work, and there were times you'd do something and know nobody had ever done it before," Warshaw says. "It was a team environment, but full of real individuals. It was definitely the most fun place I ever worked."

When you wish upon a Yar

Yars' Revenge began life as a

clone of the arcade hit "Star Castle." It was Warshaw's first assignment at Atari.

"After looking at it, I realized that to do Star Castle directly would pretty much suck," Warshaw says. "It would really not translate well to the VCS at all."

Howard cracking the whip

So he began taking Star Castle apart, pulling out the elements he knew would work and adding new touches of his own. It was the game play that consumed him most. He wanted a game that would be fun to play with a joystick and be visually stimulating, too.

He didn't want to emulate the look of Star Castle. He wanted to emulate the fun.

"The reason everything came together in Yars' Revenge is because it has an up-down, left-right thing," Warshaw says. "You have a vertical axis and a horizontal axis going simultaneously in the game, which I think makes things visually compelling. . .and I put in the full-screen explosion because I wanted there to be a big pay-off."

But after programming it, the next big challenge was naming it.

"Marketing was coming up with names for the game," he says. "The working name of the game was Time Freeze. But that seemed kind of lame. They'd just take any two space words and string them together. It was really quite pathetic."

So Warshaw came up with his own storyline, about interstellar insects fighting a shielded enemy. For the name, he indulged in a bit of alphabetical trickery.

"I named it Yar, which is Ray spelled backwards, because Ray Kassar was the CEO of Atari at the time," Warshaw says. "The actual title of the game is The Yarian Revenge of the Razak Solar System. And Razak is Kassar spelled backwards."

Of course, Kassar eventually found out about the prank. His response?

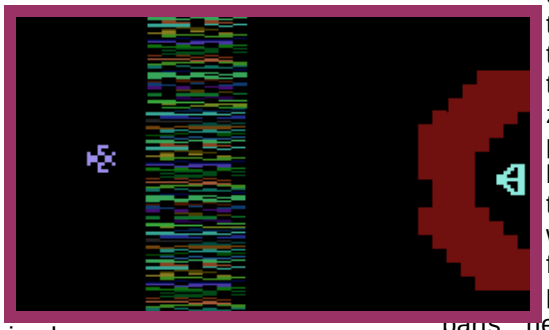
"He said, 'Very clever. Now make more games.' "

Whips and brains

Yars' Revenge went on to become a top-selling action title for Atari. Warshaw's next assignment was Raiders of the Lost Ark. Unlike today, when movie tie-ins are a regular part of the marketing scheme, the idea for a "Raiders" game didn't come until well after the movie was a hit.

"I actually flew down to Warner Brothers studio to meet with Steven Spielberg," Warshaw says. "I showed him Yars' and talked with him and told him my theory about how he was an alien, which got me quote of the month in 'Games' magazine. That was kind of cool."

Warshaw had complete creative freedom with Raiders. He knew he wanted to do an exploration-style game, but he didn't want to simply duplicate what Warren Robbinette had done with Adventure.



Yars' Revenge

"Adventure was a great game. But it was a very elemental, simple game," Warshaw says. "It was a ground breaker. It had a huge cult following and I had a lot of respect for it. So my feeling was just to do another 'Adventure' wasn't really worth it."

Instead, he wanted to raise the stakes.

"With Raiders my goal was just to make the biggest adventure game possible for the VCS," he says. "Not just the most screens, but the most different scenarios and the most immersive environment you could do."

In all, the game took eight months to complete. Warshaw was proud of the results. Raiders of the Lost Ark became his second million-selling title and helped prove the value of movie tie-ins.

"It was a brilliant marketing innovation, the idea of movie tie-in," Warshaw says. "But then they realized they only wanted to do hit movies. You'd wait for a movie to be a hit, and then jump and say quick, do a game. Which is what happened with 'E.T.' "

Atari phones home

How did E.T. end up in Warshaw's hands? Simple. He was the only person crazy enough to accept the assignment.

"No one else would take it, because it was such a short deadline," Warshaw says. "It took them until the end of July to negotiate the deal, and they needed it for the Christmas market, which meant that it had to be done by the first of September. That left you with five weeks to do the whole game."

Five weeks. Most games took at least four months. Warshaw had his work cut out for him.

He met with Spielberg again. "I spent a couple of hours laying out the basic design of the game, the world, the landing zone, the people buildings, the pits where you find the phone parts," he says. "And Spielberg goes, 'that's nice. . .but can you do a maze thing, though?' And I'm thinking, 'Geez, Steven, we want to do something new with this. I don't think doing a Pac-Man ripoff and calling it E.T. will be much fun.' "

He pauses and chuckles. "But, you know. . .it might have been better." For Warshaw, programming E.T. soon became a 24-hour obsession. "I was just working all the time," he says. "I had a development system moved into my

house. All my time was spent working. My managers, all they did was try and make sure I ate and slept occasionally and stuff."

E.T. was finished and released on time. It was heavily hyped for the Christmas market and sold millions of copies. But a lot of gamers were disappointed.

"E.T. was a great effort, but game players, they don't care about the effort that went into a cart," Warshaw says. "They care about the game. I would've liked to have had more time to work on it."

Warshaw still thinks E.T. could have been a good game with just a few minor tweaks. His desire, at the time, was to create a game with flesh-and-blood characters that players could empathize with. On that point, he thinks he succeeded.

The much maligned "E.T." for the Atari 2600

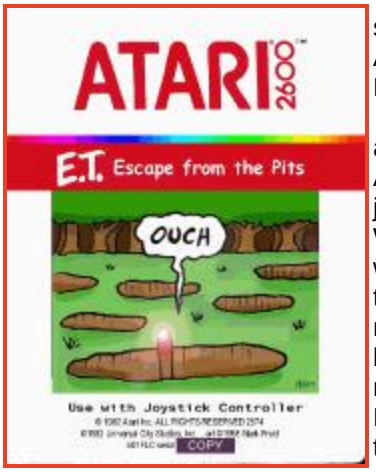
"It was okay," he says. "The only thing I was really disappointed about was the way you fell into the wells a bit too much. If I could have tuned that down, it would have been better. But fundamentally the point of the game I think is okay, the assembling the phone, avoiding the people, the whole concept."

Hmmm. Sounds like a good excuse for a new game. E.T. 2000 for the PlayStation, maybe?

"Actually," Warshaw says, "I have a good idea for a Yars' sequel. It's an idea I've had swimming around in my mind for 20 years or so. I think it would be a really fun game you could do on the VCS or the PlayStation. It would be a fun, engaging play. One thing people don't do anymore, I think, is put in really engaging game play. People are so concerned about presentation and graphics."

Games, Lies and Videotape

Game fans will be pleased to know that Warshaw is back in the video game business. He's currently working with 3DO. He says he'd like to bring some of the spirit of classic game programming into the current video game scene. He wants to foster better communication between programmers and graphic designers, to strike a balance between presentation and playability.



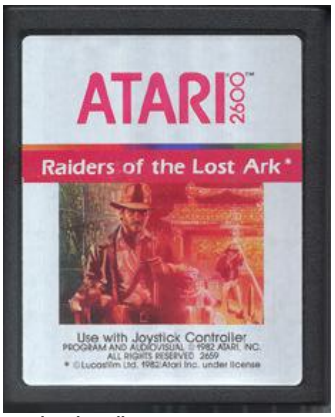
E.T. Box Parody by Mark Freid

"I'm just getting my feet wet again, getting back into it," he says. "After many years of being out of games, I realized that games are the thing I enjoy doing the most. And I've done a lot of things."

That's an understatement. After leaving Atari in 1984, Warshaw worked a variety of jobs. He dabbled in real estate, industrial robotics, writing, teaching, and photography.

But these days, his big passion is video. Warshaw is fascinated by documentary film making and now considers video his "primary love."

"Videography is very complex," he says. "It's audio and video and all about creating images in mind. I always looked at games as a broadcast medium."



Currently, Warshaw's biggest video project is a behind-the-scenes look at his days at Atari. He has finished three installments of his "Once Upon Atari" video series, with a fourth installment due this year. You can visit Warshaw's web site (home.netcom.com/~hsw/) for information on how to order the tapes.

Warshaw says "Once Upon Atari" is a no-holds-barred exploration of the world of Atari's programmers during the heyday of the 2600. He interviewed many of his fellow game designers as well as Atari founder, Nolan Bushnell.

"One thing I've always known about Atari is that it was just a great story," Warshaw says. "It was an amazing thing, an amazing moment in American business history and my personal history. Nobody's come close to touching what it was really like at Atari. It was unbelievable."

Each episode of the series tackles a different aspect of Atari. In true George Lucas fashion, Warshaw produced the final episode, "The Agony & The Ecstasy," first.

"The fourth one is very information intensive," he says. "This was my tribute and thanks to the classic gamers, the people who made the whole experience possible, the people who played the games. And so I put out something for the people who are still solid hardcore classic devotees, so they could find out technical details of the 2600, what it was actually like, what it was like programming it."

Warshaw understands the devotion many gamers feel towards Atari and the classic videogame systems of the '80s. He still likes the games, too.

"I do still play, actually," he says. "I was playing Space Invaders the other day, and a little Yars', I must confess. I still think it's a fun game."

And he draws a lot of satisfaction from knowing that his game creations are still entertaining people.

"To have had the opportunity to provide that experience, that escape, is so incredibly satisfying," he says. "That's something that will last me all my life, that there were hundreds of thousands of hours of entertainment I was directly responsible for. That's a great feeling."

CGM

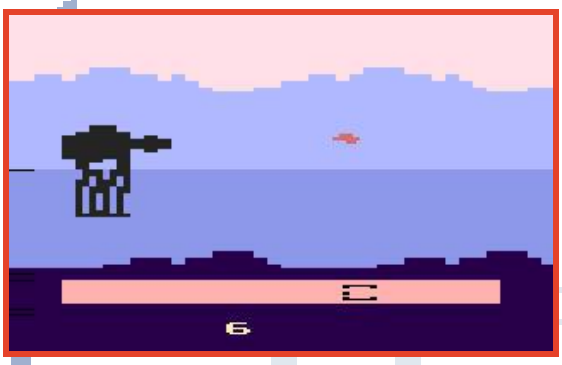
GAMES FROM THE TRENCHES

A Look Back at Classic Star Wars Games

When George Lucas unleashed Star Wars into theatres in 1977, he created more than a great film. He forever changed how Hollywood would design and market movies, particularly on the merchandising front. After an avalanche of Star Wars action figures, T-shirts, plastic light sabers, and comic books hit the stores, what better way to immerse the Star Wars junkie into the film than to actually let them be a part of the action? Naturally, video games were the next logical extension in the Star Wars merchandising juggernaut.

Use the Joystick, Luke

In 1982, Parker Brothers released the first Star Wars video game, **Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back,** for the Atari 2600. The premise is simple. Stop the advancing Imperial Walkers from reaching the shield generator by hitting them 48 times with laser fire from your Rebel Snowspeeder. The Imperial Walkers are equipped with tracking missiles, which can be fired from the front as well as from the rear. If you can keep your Snowspeeder alive for 2 minutes, "The Force Will be With You," the Star Wars "Main Theme" will play, and you will be indestructible for 20 seconds. The Imperial Walker is also capable of launching smart bombs, which will follow your Snowspeeder unless you are able to out maneuver or shoot it down.



SW: Empire Strikes Back for the Atari 2600

Empire Strikes Back was a huge hit for Parker Brothers. By offering new game play on older themes, the replay value remained high. The pace was kept fast and furious, and the simple graphics were enhanced through use of forced perspective. By having the mountains in the background move at a slower pace than the valley in the foreground, an illusion of depth was created.

Being hit by a Walker's missile may damage your ship but won't necessarily remove you from the action; the Snowspeeder can sustain up to five hits. If it is damaged, it can land on one of the valley's many crevices for quick repair and be back in action in no time. The Imperial Walkers also have randomly placed bomb hatches, but they can be destroyed with one well placed shot.

SW: Jedi Arena for the Atari 2600

Sensing a good thing when they saw it, Parker Brothers saw fit to release another title under the Star Wars banner. They also quickly learned that simply placing the Star Wars moniker on a cartridge does not a good game make. **Star Wars: Jedi Arena** had "hit" written all over it. The promise of wielding a light saber to battle opponents could make the heart skip a beat. Players' hearts skipped alright, when they realized what they had bought. Instead of "fights to the finish" duels a la Vader vs. Obi Wan, the player was instead (mis) treated to try blocking laser bolts from a Seeker sent by your opponent on the other side of the arena. The Lightsabers never got within 10 feet of each other, which was a major disappointment. If you destroyed your opponent's force field with the laser bolts in three separate matches, you were declared the winner. Big deal.

Perhaps thinking the way to a true Jedi's heart was through the cockpit, Parker Brothers followed up Jedi Arena with **Return of the Jedi: Death Star Battle**. This game re-enacts the final Death Star Battle in Return of the Jedi. Manning the Millennium Falcon, you must battle Tie Interceptors and fight your way through a force field in order to get close enough to the Death Star to destroy it. Once close enough, you must chip away at the reconstructing Death Star while avoiding its Death Ray. This is a fast paced, challenging game. Unfortunately, the cartridge is a bit on the rare side and can be difficult to find. Keep scouring the flea markets and garage sales for this one.

Speaking of rare, Parker Brothers had intentions of releasing another Star Wars game entitled **Return of the Jedi: Ewok Adventure**. This game was touted in the Parker Brothers catalog as being available in Fall of

SW: Death Star Battle for the Atari 2600

1983. Commercially it never saw the light of day, but an anonymous collector did snap up what is believed to be the only existing prototype of this game. Since the game is privately held, we can only hope that either the owner will one day share it with everyone in one form or another or another prototype comes into existence. A prototype of the game's box was found (empty) with the title "Revenge of the Jedi: Game 1."

The object of the game is to guide your hang gliding Ewok over Stormtroopers, AT-ST's, and Biker Scouts, pelt them with rocks and maneuver the Ewok to the Imperial shield generator to destroy it. (Not with rocks, I'm assuming.) As much as I can't stand Ewoks, it does sound as if the play mechanics had the potential to make for a fun game. If you find one of these rare carts, be sure to let us know. Or better yet, send it to us!

STAR WARS*®:
RETURN OF THE JEDI*™
EWOK ADVENTURE*™
You take the role of an EWOK in this thrilling game based on scenes from RETURN OF THE JEDI. Now a member of the Rebel cause, you must hang glide over dangerous territory in order to reach the Imperial shield generator. Your mission: to blow it apart! But as you swoop through the forest, IMPERIAL STORMTROOPERS, AT-ST's and BIKER SCOUTS will try to shoot you down. Hurl rocks at the enemy as you avoid their fire and close in on the shield generator. 1 or 2 players
Atari Video Computer System
(graphics shown)
Sears Video Arcade

Ewok Adventure as featured in the Parker Brothers Catalog

Another rarity is simply known as "**Revenge of the Jedi: Jedi 2**." This mysterious game has only its box as a clue to its existence. To date, no prototype of the game itself has been found. Judging from the box's artwork, it seems to be based on the skiff battle scene in Return of the Jedi and features the Sarlacc Pit as one of the main perils.

Arcades Get the Force

In 1983, Atari released into arcades one of the most stunning games seen up to this point. The arcade version of Star Wars was comprised of vector graphics, synthesized sound samples of movie dialogue, and a flight yoke to emulate the X-Wing controls. Most importantly, it allowed the player to experience a first person perspective of flying a Rebel X-Wing into the climactic fray of the Death Star Battle. The arcade cabinets were built as upright machines but the real enjoyment came from the sit down units. Here you were able to climb inside, have a seat, and immerse yourself in the Star Wars Universe.

The game consisted of three levels. The first objective was to wipe out the incoming Tie Fighters in an outer space dogfight (taking a few potshots at Vader's Tie Interceptor in the process). The player then descended to the Death Star surface to test his aim and flying skills in an attempt to knock out the Towers. In the third and final level, you got to pilot your way through the Death Star trench in a bid to fire cannons into the exhaust port, which would destroy the Death Star.

The movie dialogue, which was synthesized into the game, actually helped enhance the game play. Obi Wan lightly urging you to "Use the Force, Luke" in the trench level was, in fact, a hint to not fire your weapons and just avoid the oncoming fire. Not firing on the exhaust port until Han Solo proclaimed, "You're all clear, kid" would earn you bonus points.

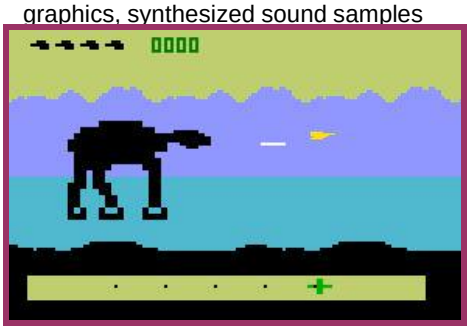
Parker Brothers made a fairly impressive, albeit rare, conversion for the Atari 2600 as well as the Colecovision, although it just wasn't the same experience the arcade version had to offer.

Star Wars Arcade

The blocky graphics and lack of a speech synthesizer just didn't cut it for these translations, as noble an effort as they were.

In 1984, Atari released a quirky "**Return of the Jedi**" arcade game. To mimic the film, the game's action would alternate between what was happening on the Moon of Endor and flying the Millennium Falcon in an attempt to take out the Death Star's reactor. The first level can only be described as being a "diagonal scroller." Hopping on a speeder bike in the Forest of Endor would earn you the pleasure of dodging trees and booby traps while maneuvering yourself to shoot down the pursuing Stormtroopers. The point of view definitely takes some getting used to.

Atari followed up in the arcades with "**The Empire Strikes Back.**" However, in an effort to cut corners, they simply modified the existing Star Wars arcade cabinets with new stickers and replaced the Star Wars ROM board with the new Empire Strikes Back ROM board. Three new levels replaced the old ones, allowing the pilot to take on Imperial Walkers, hunt down Probe Droids, and blast through an asteroid field. These conversions are a bit

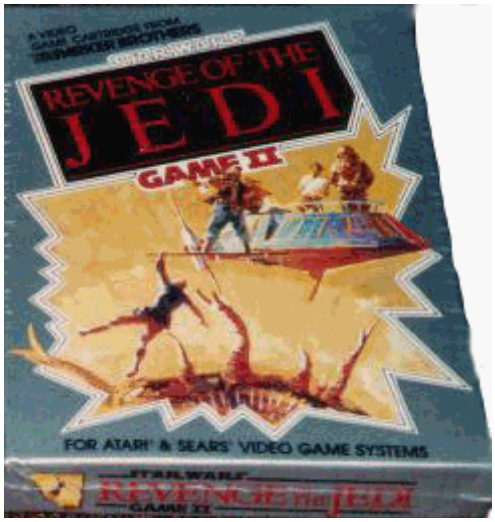


SW: Empire Strikes Back for the Intellivision

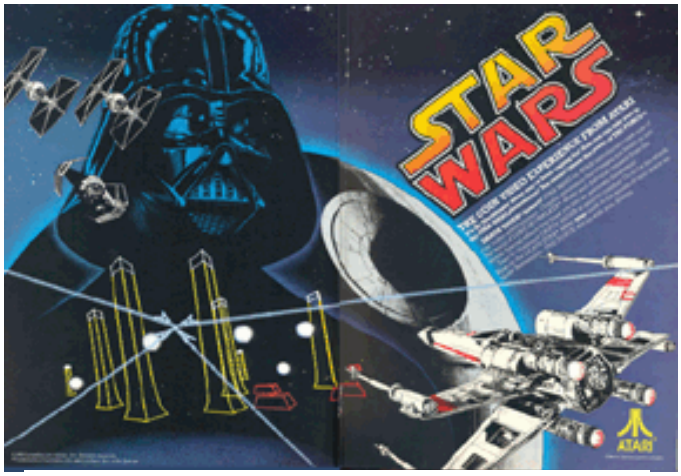
Star Wars Arcade for the Atari 2600

Return of the Jedi Arcade

Photo by Josh Ling



Revenge of the Jedi Game II Proto



Star Wars Arcade Ad, 1983

harder to find in the arcades and you may even miss them at first glance, dismissing them as the original Star Wars arcade game.

May the Force Feedback be with you

Once The Crash of the video game industry seemed like a distant nightmare, Nintendo rose from the ashes with its 8-bit Nintendo Entertainment System (NES). Once the NES established itself in the American living room, the Star Wars video game juggernaut returned. Releasing Star Wars and The Empire Strikes Back, players could once again play the role of their space heroes.

When the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES) was introduced, Star Wars fans were rewarded with amazing games. Super Star Wars, Super Empire Strikes Back, and Super Return of the Jedi featured spectacular and identifiable graphics. Luke actually looked like Luke! Blowing away Jawas, driving Luke's Landspeeder, and being able to switch between characters made the titles worthy of the Star Wars name.

The SNES Star Wars games set a new benchmark in game design for all Star Wars titles. Since then, as technology has progressed, an impressive deluge of Star Wars titles have appeared. Examples include Sega's arcade versions, allowing you to attack Imperial Cruisers head on, the impressive "Rogue Squadron" for the Nintendo 64, and the enormous number of titles for the PC and Mac. When you look at the progression the Star Wars games have taken, it's hard to believe it all started with a small block attacking an Imperial Walker with the aid of a joystick and one single button. So grab a joystick and give Empire Strikes Back another whirl on your 2600. And feel free to hum along with the music when you have "The Force."

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WIN!

Win an autographed copy of "Phoenix - The Fall and Rise of Videogames" by Leonard Herman.

Classic Gamer Magazine is giving away two autographed copies of Leonard Herman's authoritative book about the history of videogames.

But ya gotta earn it!

We're looking for aspiring Longfellows and Maya Angelous!

Send either an original classic videogame poem or Haiku and we'll award Phoenix as a prize in each category.

One prize per category will be awarded. Winners and select entries will be printed in a future issue.

Poem Example:

There once was a man
who would boast,
"I'm the man who can
eat the most"
Although he ate lots
He ate only dots
And occasional side-
dish of ghost.

- Damien Quicksilver

Haiku Example:

(A Haiku consists of a 3 line stanza with a 5,7,5 syllable pattern)

Donkey Kong climbs up
Crazy barrels do descend
Die Mario! Die!

- too embarrassed to admit

Send in your entry (with your contact info) to:

Classic Gamer Magazine Poetry Contest
7770 R[illegible]
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The Last Don

From Atari to Sony to VMLabs, Donald A. Thomas Jr. has witnessed and worked through the best and worst times of the video gaming industry. MicroTimes Magazine recognized Mr. Thomas as one of the industry's top 100 leaders in 1991.

Mr. Thomas took the time to talk candidly with Classic Gamer Magazine's Patrick Wong about his in-depth website and the video gaming industry; from the fall of Atari to romancing the video game market and her consumers and of course, Classic Gaming.

An Interview with Don Thomas

By Patrick Wong

Classic Gamer Magazine: The birth of videogames began with a couple of kids standing around in a soda place playing Pong. What would you say was the defining moment in history that transformed videogames from being a casual, almost obscure, pastime to one that has made a cultural impact on society in much the same way as movies have?

Don Thomas: I find that question very hard to answer because I believe that moment was when kids *could* play Pong while standing around drinking a soda. Some may say that moment was when color was introduced to video games, or when vector graphics illuminated the industry with new possibilities, or when video gaming was brought home. Personally, I don't think video games have reached the same pinnacle as movies have. The movie industry has matured enough to realize that they are a much more powerful force working together. There are many organizations that unify the distribution process, the performers, and the studios. On the other hand, the video game industry continues to be full of companies all doing their own thing without much unified bond. There are no spectacular awards shows. No one cares what the best programmers are doing or who is marrying who. New releases are never launched with the dazzle of spotlights and the elegance of the silver screen.

CGM: Speaking of movies, there's a scene from the Michael J. Fox movie "Back to the Future Part II" where the character Marty McFly goes into the future and visits a futuristic ice-cream & soda place and finds a Nintendo arcade shoot-em up game. Moments later, some kids walk in, watch McFly shoot some cowboys, and are far from impressed that he was so skilled at this classic shoot-em up. Do you think kids today, looking back at these old classic games, are far from impressed at what we were playing with back then? Would you agree that today's kids are generally better suited for today's titles than someone who was raised playing the 2600?

DT: I suppose that's like asking me if the kids today prefer to watch Toy Story and Titanic or some old Clark Gable film. <g> I think a lot of kids appreciate the roots of video games and enjoy seeing how far the industry has come, technology wise. I think it's hard to imagine playing Breakout after a few hours of Quake. <g> One cannot explain to the gaming generation of today what a thrill it was to play Air/Sea Battle, Outlaw, or Tank. It's like the difference between radio and color TV. The original game classics were played more in the mind than on the screen. Just like a good radio play, enough was provided to the senses so that the participant could imagine spectacular things.

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Don's Website: icwhen.com

CGM: Radio to color TV. . .that's a big gap to illustrate the difference in today's gaming. Knowing that the industry has changed in so short a time from an old AM radio to today's stereo Sony tv, does the future of video gaming scare you?

DT: Not at all. But I do think some companies are going to suddenly realize that gaming has left behind the younger minds and the minds of all ages who once played video games to relax and have fun, not to be driven with virtually real tension the entire time.

CGM: What kind of games do you envision your kids, and possibly grandkids, will be playing in the future?

DT: My 16 year old, when he plays video games, likes sports games. When he has kids, I can only imagine that they'll like sports games too. I suppose, by then, we'll finally figure out that the games look so real we won't have to pay the high salaries to real sports pros to play any more. <g>

CGM: Was your son brought up with today's video games, the old classics, or both?

DT: My son is a great sportsman. He didn't grow up too interested in video games and I haven't pushed him. Instead of playing video sports, he likes to be in the real thing. He's a great goalie in soccer, a great first-baseman in softball, and a pretty darn good pavement surfer on a skateboard. When he does play video games, he likes the immersive sports titles.

CGM: What sports titles do you and your son enjoy playing?

DT: Kyle loves the better baseball, soccer, racing, basketball, and football titles. I can't even begin to compete well with him, so I sometimes watch him play against the computer.

CGM: It seems like a sports game can't survive without the Major League Baseball teams, the NFL logos, or even the WWF wrestlers. Does an athlete's endorsement really make or break a title? What's wrong with playing a sports game without all the tie-in to professional teams?

DT: I think the easiest way to answer that is to consider the alternative. Sports games are measured by how real they look. How real does a baseball game look without logos on the players' jerseys? How about a race car

without company sponsors? How about football with plain helmets and unadorned end zones? Or a soccer game without rotating billboards? Once one logo enters a game, the obligation is there to license the product. I also think gamers like to see how specific pro teams play in simulations which include them in the game.

CGM: Do you remember Atari's Homerun? <g>

DT: Now that was a sports title I could master! <g>

CGM: Switching back to the issue of impact, what about the business aspect? In the past few years, video games have out-grossed Hollywood in terms of box-office receipts for the first time. There was even supposed to have been an awards show, like the Oscars, supported by the Science and Art Foundation (although I'm not sure if the award show was any good or if it's still around). How many years will it be before our industry finally gets the glitz and glamour it so deserves, and which category do you feel would be the biggest award of the night: Best lead in a video game or best lead programmer? <g>

DT: It's not a matter of when the industry "finally gets," it's a matter of when the industry "finally creates." The big TV and movie awards happen due to the industry realizing they benefit most by industry wide self-promotion. I think some very serious entrepreneurs need to form one or more organizations that do nothing but help create stars, foster news coverage, and host awards events. When this happens, video games and similar forms of entertainment will become as popular as VHS and Compact Discs. In the meantime, video games may make a lot of money, but the industry will still not be regarded as "glitzy."

CGM: These stars you mention, are these video game stars like Pac-Man and Donkey Kong or are they programmers?

DT: The programmers, the producers, the soundtrack artists, the animators, the promoters, etc.

CGM: Why does mainstream media ignore video games? Is it because most members of the media may not be informed, or even interested in video games? It seems they'd rather bash video games than celebrate them.

DT: I don't think mainstream media thinks that there is any romance behind the scenes of making and marketing video games, but I don't think that is their fault. It's the industry's responsibility to create that romance and exploit it.

CGM: What can the industry do to help create that much needed romance between the developers and the players?

DT: It needs to reinvest a portion of its bloated marketing budgets into campaigns and projects that benefit the industry. Nintendo, for instance, spends virtually all of its marketing bucks promoting Nintendo. What these companies forget is that share of market is only a small part of the long term formula. 80% share of a crummy market is a hollow victory, but 30% of a multi-billion dollar industry generates a lot of smiles. What Nintendo, Sony, Sega (et al) should do is grow up a little and start their own "Got Milk" agendas. Run ads promoting video gaming as a family activity in mainstream media. Sponsor awards ceremonies more aggressively than what is going on now. Generate studies of what gamers like and distribute it freely in the industry. Take a little power out of the hands of the retailers and put it into the hands of the consumer. Legitimize the decision to have an evening playing video games as acceptable as going to a movie. Make superstars out of the producers and coders.

CGM: Maybe the industry needs to unite like the movie studios do?

DT: Some of the Spielbergs in the gaming industry need to have a vision of where the gaming industry can go and form the organizations that help build the industry, not just individual companies.

CGM: Would a gaming committee funded by video game companies dedicated only to promoting the industry be a first step?

DT: There are some smaller organizations that do that now, but not effectively in my opinion. The gaming industry is large enough that power campaigns should be afforded.

CGM: What about media coverage? There doesn't seem to be any serious coverage of the video game industry. There are lots of magazines out there

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I'll give you one guess...
GAME BOY COLOR
SELECT START
GBStation.com
news - reviews - cheats - forums - chat

but not one of the writers has ever been invited to a discussion on, let's say, ABC's Nightline. Is there a need for more serious writers?

DT: The writers are there, I think. I don't think the media infrastructure thinks that the mass market cares much. I'm afraid they're right. That is why I think the industry needs to band together to create that thirst in the minds of the masses.

CGM: What would you like to see done to help promote the video game image?

DT: That's for the PR people to analyze and propose.

CGM: 3DO tried to standardize the industry with their system. Would a standardized video game system unite the industry like it did with the Video Cassette Recorder?

DT: Not in my opinion. In the home movie industry, there are VHS, Laser, DVD, and some other obscure formats, which give the consumer options. The gaming industry thrives better with competition. . .an effort of one platform outdoing the other. It costs the consumer a little more if (s)he wants both/ all systems, but that's the price to be paid for the privilege of choice.

CGM: Would this same competition that the industry thrives on be its Achilles' heel? The one thing that'll keep this industry from coming together for the good of it?

DT: The movie industry doesn't care what format you buy as long as you buy. They'll publish in whatever format consumers want.

CGM: If the video game industry thrives on competition, yet has to be more unified, doesn't that contradict itself?

DT: Milk companies compete, but the Dairy Association wants to know if you've, "got Milk?" Flower shops compete, but FTD reminds us to buy flowers all year long. If the industry does better, then everyone in it does better.

CGM: Would competing over better software (with a hardware standard) be a more "evolved" vision of the future of the gaming industry rather than competing hardware?

DT: Systems do often compete over software. There's a term for that type of software. . ."system sellers." For Sega, it was Sonic, for Nintendo, it's Mario, and for Playstation, it's Crash Bandicoot.

"I think very highly of all the Tramiels. They were often unreasonable in my view, but if it were not for the Tramiels, Atari wouldn't have continued on for more than a decade more."

CGM: Does a standardized system seem at all possible?

DT: The consumer better hope not. They benefit more from competition.

CGM: Since we're bringing up all the big names. . .you worked for the Grand-Daddy of all video games: Atari. How long were you with Atari and what was your position?

DT: I was with Atari from November 1989 through August 1996. I held many positions in the areas of direct fulfillment, customer service, and marketing.

CGM: Since you worked with the Tramiel family for a long time, could you tell us about them and your feelings towards them?

DT: I think very highly of all the Tramiels. They were often unreasonable in my view, but if it were not for the Tramiels, Atari wouldn't have continued on for more than a decade more.

CGM: In an article you wrote about your days at Atari, you described how Atari was losing a million dollars a day before the Tramiels took over. I don't think any of us can picture working in an environment like that.

DT: Atari was losing a million dollars a day in 1984. I did not join Atari until 1989. Having spoken to people who were there at the time, I understand there was a lot of waste and overspending.

CGM: There seems to be a lot of bitterness and resentment from Atari loyalists towards the Tramiel clan even though at one point under the Tramiels' direction, the company grossed almost $500 million. Why such hard feelings?

DT: Consumers rarely feel that companies do things in the consumer's interest. It's natural that consumers always want more and companies prioritize profits. A lot of people do not think that the Tramiels spent enough money in marketing or any number of other business areas. I've uniquely been in both positions: an angry outsider wanting the company to do so much more, and a frustrated insider realizing that a whole lot more was being done than anyone realized.

CGM: In a recent article, you wrote some more details about the Tramiels. There aren't a lot of gamers who know much, if anything at all, about them. Tell us something about them. Are there any interesting stories you'd like to share with us?

DT: For the sake of time, let me just say that they are actually fine people and have souls like the rest of us. Jack built a business from a mindset that was developed during the worst of war times. His ideals were often ruthless and he believed that people made their own destinies in the corporate world. He believed that a better mousetrap would always capture the lens of the media and the hearts of consumers, but when the industries changed, he was wrong. Fortunately for him, he became rich when his ideals were more accurately matched to the industry.

CGM: As an insider, what was and what might have been accomplished by the Tramiels?

DT: The Tramiels gave life to Atari for more than a decade than it would have had. Jack founded Commodore which was also a monumental part of the early days of home computing. The Tramiels, especially Jack, deserve a great deal of honor as well as criticism.

CGM: As an outsider, what could the Tramiels have done to keep Atari prospering?

DT: He should have started making PC clones and publishing PC (MS-licensed) software a very long time ago. On the gaming side, he should have left the hardware business and reintroduced updated Atari classics on the new game systems.

CGM: I'm not too familiar with Mr. Ted Hoff. I am aware that he was President of Atari before the end and then went on to Sega. Tell us about him and your days working with him.

DT: He was unusually willing to listen and to find ways to resolve issues us-

ing the best ideas of everyone on his team. He never took undue credit and was always willing to give credit when due. It was a pleasure to work for/with him.

CGM: What was his vision for Atari?

DT: Eventually, it was Atari Interactive. . .software for PCs and other platforms. That was the right direction to go to keep Atari afloat, but Jack wanted nothing to do with it.

CGM: Your article (found at icwhen.com) on the Hasbro/Atari buyout brings up a lot of good, unanswered questions that have all been ignored by our mainstream press. May I ask you to speculate on some of the answers to the questions that you asked in your article? Specifically, what happened to the Atari employees at JTS?

DT: My observation was that they were methodically asked to step away from their Atari assignments or laid off. The significance was that no one in power had any real intentions to try to make Atari work at JTS. I think most people assumed JTS would try to do something productive with it other than simply absorb the blood out of it.

CGM: And what became of the $25 million bridge loan that Atari gave up in the merger?

DT: I really don't know specifically except that I don't know that any of it went to turn Atari around.

CGM: How much would you estimate Atari is worth with all her properties and software titles?

DT: It all depends on your perspective and what you plan to do with it. It was worth $5 million for as long as JTS was willing to settle for that and Hasbro had the capital and willingness to pay it. Rumors circulated over a year ago that it was worth about $1 million to Nolan Bushnell. I suspect Hasbro would say it's worth a lot more if someone offered to acquire it from them. We'll see what Hasbro does with what they have. Since I doubt Hasbro will ever spin it off as a separate company again, I suspect that "Atari" will ultimately become valueless and some of the individual game titles will be all that maintains any worth.

"I think most people assumed JTS would try to do something productive with it (Atari) other than simply absorb the blood out of it."

CGM: It seems when Hasbro bought the Atari properties, hardly anyone in the news paid any attention to it (or they reported the news incorrectly in some cases). It's really a shame that everyone has almost forgotten Atari. It's an even bigger shame to learn that Hasbro only paid $5 million for Atari. Is there anything we haven't heard or learned about this acquisition?

DT: You've probably heard what I have heard by now. I haven't heard much more. You're right, I haven't seen much in mainstream press although there was a story in the Wall Street Journal that was very poorly researched. They didn't even know about the transaction amount of $5,000,000. Hasbro paid much more than the properties were worth to JTS. JTS had no motivation to make use of any of the Atari properties. They were only collecting dust and becoming increasingly worthless. Hasbro has started, and will probably continue, to breathe new life into some old Atari classics.

CGM: Any second guesses as to how Atari could have turned herself around in her final years?

DT: A great product, tremendous support from third-party, disproportionate marketing and advertising at launch, and all the things that go in to making these things happen. Once Atari lost all that money with Federated, I don't think they had much of a chance.

CGM: Can you help clear up the Federated stores confusion? Up here in the Northeast, I don't think there are any of their stores. Is this the same Federated that owns Macy's?

DT: The Federated Group of Electronics Stores was a regional chain of stores similar to Highland, Circuit City, Good Guys, or Best Buy. They had nothing to do with Federated Stores which is a conglomerate of retail chains such as Macy's. Federated Electronics had 67 stores when Atari acquired them. Jack paid roughly $1,000,000 per store.

CGM: Is Federated Electronics in business today?

DT: No, it was discontinued in 1989.

CGM: How many Atari 8-bits and ST's were sold? I heard of numbers between 2-3 million for the 8-bits and 1 million of the 16-bits here in the states. Would that be accurate?

DT: That might well be accurate. I know they were big numbers. I never saw the records myself.

CGM: In your web site, you mention that Atari was building supercomputers and Unix computers. What became of them and why were they cancelled at the last moment?

DT: They were cancelled when it became clear that they could not compete the way they thought they could.

CGM: You used to write programs for the Atari ST didn't you? You owned a company called "Artisan Software." What programs did you write for the ST?

DT: Word Quest - A comprehensive word search puzzle generator, Word Quest 2 - A crossword puzzle generator, Graph Maker - Easy graphs with simple data, and Transport - Atari Portfolio to Atari 16-bit computer file transfer application.

CGM: Let's talk about your website, ICWHEN.COM. It's a website featuring the entire history of computer & video games, listed in chronological order. First, how long did it take you to research and sort all the information you had before putting it on your site?

DT: I think I've been on it for over 7 years now.

CGM: Incredible! Now the site also features articles you've written over the years covering topics like we're discussing here. Are you a night writer or an impulsive writer?

DT: Hehe. Both I suppose. If the impulse hits me at the office, I'll make some quick notes and write later, otherwise, it can happen at any time while near my computer.

CGM: Seeing how few books there are offering a detailed history of video games, are there any plans for a book version? If so, how long before we might see it on the shelves?

DT: I have no plans at this time. I understand that underwriters are not easy to come by for that kind of project.

CGM: What new articles are you currently working on? Any more poetry? Will the web site also include old video game magazine articles or interviews?

DT: I.C. When grows whenever I can find time to work on it. I have mountains of resource materials still to pour through. The articles are things I do when I'm inspired. <g>

CGM: What serves as inspiration when you're writing an article or story?

DT: Actually it's usually something that rattles my cage a little. . . corporate ignorance, industry misconceptions, etc. For instance, I see so many similarities between what's happening to Apple and what happened to Atari. Just look in any store like EB or Babbages and see how much PC software there is, then how Mac applications are buried in small quantities in the back. Does no one remember how this happened to Commodore or Atari? I'm not so sure that Jobs can swallow his pride and study what went wrong in history to steer through the problems in the future.

"I valued games by how fun they were to play or watch, not so much what technical accomplishments they achieved."

The home computer and gaming industries all like to think their problems are always unique. Look what happened to NeoGeo and 3DO. In my view those were 100% predictable. It makes me upset when people head straight for a brick wall when there are people who can see the wall.

Sega's (Saturn) fiasco stuns me. U.S. executives announce that the Saturn had been abandoned. Then they say that they mistakenly interpreted a Japanese directive and they have not abandoned Saturn. Then the head of Sega Japan basically comes out and says that Saturn is abandoned in the U.S. The consumer knows that the Saturn is kaput, but it's a lot worse than bad planning to look the consumer straight in the eye and say "Good Riddance." I was surprised when Sega didn't move Ted Hoff up the corporate ladder. Ted understands the U.S. market and the consumer. He also listens to the people under him as well as over him. Well, all these issues are other stories. <g>

CGM: How vital is price point to a system's success? Was it the price that predicted NeoGeo and 3DO were going to fail? What were the other signs?

DT: Price, the fact that there were too many irons in the fire, consistent announcements, and lack of follow through.

CGM: You mentioned Sega and their Saturn; another example of an expensive toy. It was released with a price tag of $299 before slowly going down to $150. What gave Sega the impression that parents were willing to shell out that kind of money for a game machine?

DT: Actually all the systems are launched rather high and settle on a lower price soon thereafter. Consumers don't realize how little is made on the platforms and that the profits are made on software. Shaver/razor philosophy.

CGM: I'd like to touch on more of the video game history your site ICWHEN covers, specifically, Classic Gaming. What are Don Thomas' top 10 titles for the 2600?

DT: Gosh, I don't think I could do that. There were hundreds and hundreds of titles. I liked Space Invaders, Crazy Climber, Space Chase, Megamania, Frogger, Chopper Command, Missile Command, Joust, David's Midnight Magic, Pole Position, Moon Patrol, Centipede, Gorf, Battlezone, Surround, Flag Capture, and so many, many more.

CGM: Alright, alright you've made your point. <g> While we're making lists, what are your top 10 games for its technical merits?

DT: I was never very close to that side of the business. I valued games by how fun they were to play or watch, not so much what technical accomplishments they achieved.

CGM: Let's discuss a few of the big titles. Mind if I ask how high you've scored on Space Invaders? What wave can you reach up to in Missile Command? What's your best time in Pole Position?

DT: I'm 42 years old. I played those games actively 17-18 years ago. I have no idea what my scores were. I can tell you they were low. I thought the games were fun and I would try to beat my own scores, but I could never beat the guys who had more time to play them than I did.

CGM: Which titles would you say have pushed the 2600 to the max?

DT: That depends on when you ask the question. The initial designers thought the system was pushed to the limit early on, then later, software designers found a way to implement a "new technology" called bank switching which doubled the capacity on a cartridge. Overall, the quality of games improved as the system aged. Ms. Pac-Man was much more advanced than Pac-Man for a great number of reasons. Many people felt that the Supercharger was a new innovation to push the system's limits.

CGM: I'm sure there are a lot of people who aren't too familiar with the Supercharger. Would you mind giving us a break down of it? Have you played it? What are your thoughts on the games for it?

DT: The Supercharger was a device that allowed specific games to be loaded by cassette instead of cartridge. They tried to market the product by saying that the software was so much better. I think many people agree that the Supercharger allowed more stages of a game to be played, but at any given moment, the graphics and game play were pretty standard when compared to comparable cartridge games.

CGM: There was a game for the Atari 2600 titled "Maze Craze." I don't think there was one person who didn't love the game even though it was basically some squares running around in a maze. Are there any other addictive titles out there that the rest of us may have missed simply because the graphics weren't good enough or it didn't feature a big video game star like Pac-Man?

DT: "Surround," "Flag Capture," "3-D Tic-Tac-Toe," "Checkers". . .

CGM: Was there one system or game in particular that really helped bridge the gap from video games being a singular 2-D experience into a complete art form with all the graphics, music, and special effects?

DT: I guess a little depends on your definition of "3D." I think the most stunning impact of 3D graphics was made with Nintendo's Donkey Kong Country. I remember seeing that at a trade show and being blown away. Then I had to go back to the Atari Jaguar booth and wish those graphics were on our machine. Actually, Rayman was stunning also, but I don't think it ever received quite the fanfare it deserved. Examples like that are often relative.

For instance Wolfenstein 3D was not as visually stunning as Donkey Kong Country, but it made up in 3D immersion what it lacked in detail.

CGM: Donkey Kong Country is by far one of the most impressive tittles ever produced on any system. Perhaps it's because it takes the SNES to a limit no one knew it had. It seems many companies don't push their system's limits; instead, they introduce the next one. The Atari 2600 was pushed all the way to the breaking point and beyond with titles like Solaris (released ten years after the console's release). Do companies today push their systems as much as they should?

DT: Yes, but not always. Companies are in business to make money. If they push every game to the limit, consumers would see phenomenal software, but not often enough. Companies would go broke financing big, three-year projects. Consumers also want volume and selection. There's a market for Chess games for instance, but I don't think every new Chess game has to pull out all the stops in system performance to appeal to that market.

CGM: Is it a waste of time for the companies (to push things to the max) since that better system is around the corner?

DT: Sometimes. One thing to remember is that game designers are reinventing the systems they develop on every day. Any one system is designed to exploit a given set of graphics, sound, and speed parameters based on the technology available when it was designed. When you throw the end result into a room full of creative game designers, they'll eventually find things that the hardware designers never thought of. The process takes time, but in an evolutionary direction.

The consumer should and does demand this. Any game system would become boring fast if all the initial games did everything the system was capable of doing and there was no hope of doing something bigger, better and brighter down the road.

CGM: Activision is often credited as the company that pushed the 2600 to the max with titles like "Laser Blast" and "Space Shuttle." Who are today's Activisions that help push systems like the Sony PlayStation to the max?

DT: Back when Activison made games for the 2600, they were pretty much on their own. Their own engineers had to invent ways to push the envelope. In this new era, all the companies are constantly in touch with the makers of the platform and constantly sharing licensed innovations. I think this helps make all software be better than it would be. I suppose this is a bit of a cop out answer to your question because obviously some companies seem to have more hits than others, but I think there are a lot of companies that put out exceptional work.

"My opinion is give the consumer what (s)he wants. It's not my opinion that businesses should set morals or run families."

CGM: That's ok Don, just don't cop out on the rest of my questions, ok? <g> The Atari 2600 far outlived any expectations. From 1977 to 1990, the 2600 was available as a retail, commercial product. Today, systems barely last 5 years. Will we ever see a system that'll hang around for as long as the 2600 has?

TDT: The 2600's true life cycle was closer to 5 years, too. There were just so many of them. Within the industry, a life cycle is evaluated by its ability to make money, not by how long people play them. There are people who still play with all the systems on some level, but the life cycle for most of them is pretty much over.

My feeling is that the more sophisticated video game systems get, the longer the life cycle. This is because it takes a lot of effort for anyone to substantially surpass the technology with affordable hardware. You'll see the PlayStation extend well beyond 5 years I think, but then as soon as something substantially replaces the technology, the consumer will drop their loyalties like a lead balloon and jump to the new platform.

CGM: Could you be more specific when you said, "The 2600's true life cycle was closer to 5 years, too. There were just so many of them"? I remember the 2600 had games released for it commercially as late as 1990 with games like Solaris, Double Dragon, and Rampage. Doesn't that make the life cycle over 10 years?

DT: The life cycle of a game system usually refers to the time period that it generates a profit for the company making them. Atari was not making money on the 2600 platform in the late 80s, early 90s although there were feeble attempts to revive interest.

CGM: Will any system ever be as big or have as big a life cycle as the 2600?

DT: PlayStation is headed in that direction.

CGM: Will the 2600 in my closet ever be worth a million dollars? Maybe a place in the Smithsonian? <g>

DT: I doubt it. But you should check out eBay auctions. Atari memorabilia is selling for some big bucks.

CGM: The one video game everyone associates the 70s with is Pong. Which video game would you say most symbolize the 80s?

DT: 80s? Pac-Man.

CGM: Pac-Man was an almost non-violent game that won the hearts of boys, girls, men, and women worldwide. What made Pac-Man and Ms. Pac-Man so appealing?

DT: Simple to learn the rules, increasingly difficult, and cute.

CGM: What about today's games. The level of violence and sex in today's games is more disturbing than ever, from the blood and guts of Grand Theft Auto to the nude strip shows in Duke Nuke 'em. That's something relatively new since I can't remember too many of our titles having anything like that. Back then, the thought of giving video games a rating was unheard of. Should something more be done about the sex and violence in videogames?

DT: My opinion is give the consumer what (s)he wants. It's not my opinion that businesses should set morals or run families. I do wish parents cared more and took their responsibilities [more seriously] to bring up moral households. Parents should actively see what kids are viewing on the Internet, television, and in video games. The TV industry started rating their own shows a couple years ago. Guess what? No one pays much attention to them.

A good business finds a product to legally sell to the public. If the public is buying software that allows the user to slaughter church groups and cheerleaders, then publishing polka sing-a-long databases seems to be one way to go out of business fast.

CGM: I remember there was an attachment that allowed SNES and Genesis owners to hook up a virtual bat or golf clubs to their system. Can we expect to see more of these attachments? Is that the future of sports games?

DT: The product for SNES was called Batter-Up by Sports Sciences. When you have kids and they tell you they want to swing a $40 bat in the house, you might appreciate why such a product is destined to fail in the mass market. Most parents will probably agree that a video game is an inside toy and a baseball bat or golf club is an outside toy.

"Put Frogger, Pac-Man, Centipede, or Zaxxon into my hands and I go crazy."

CGM: What about strategy guides? Video games depend heavily on strategy and tip guides. Do they really help enhance the enjoyment of a game or do they take away from it with a trick here and a pattern there?

DT: Strategy guides are only used by people who want to use them. I can drive from my house to your house with or without a map. It's my choice. Obviously, the more information I have, the less challenging it is, but at some point I'm glad I got to your house if that was my goal. I think the access to strategies allows gaming companies to make software that is more challenging since they know that gamers can get at least some help if they want it.

CGM: Video games and big budget movies go hand in hand, from yesterday's "E.T.," "Raiders of the Lost Ark," and even "Attack of the Killer Tomatoes" to today's "007," "Toy Story," and "Star Wars." When will video game publishers learn that a big movie doesn't necessarily mean it'll turn into a big video game?

DT: I suppose at the same time they learn that big movie budgets don't always mean a box office hit. The fact is that when a big picture is planned, the industries know there will be a window of opportunity to capitalize on whatever phenomenon it generates. This window of opportunity establishes some straight forward deadlines. For instance, you can release the next new Tetris almost anytime you want, but a new Waterworld game coming out in 1999 is a pretty stale concept. These deadlines can limit how much can be done with a game and often keep it from being outstanding. But that's okay. Not every game can be a blockbuster. . .otherwise there wouldn't be blockbusters anymore. <g>

CGM: There were so many movies about video games from War Games to D.A.R.Y.L. to Cloak & Dagger. Which was your favorite movie that featured a video game based story?

DT: I liked Cloak & Dagger, Tron, and War Games. More recently, I liked The Net.

CGM: Unlike Myst or Riven, Square's Final Fantasy VIII gives gamers the never before seen blend of cinematic story telling and old fashioned game play. Myst and Riven, although featuring great graphics, never gave gamers the feeling they were really playing it. Some would call them a glorified picture show. What are your thoughts on Square's Final Fantasy VIII?

DT: Hehe. I'm a classic gaming aficionado. I've seen the intro to FFVIII and thought it was awesome, but I'm not a fan of that type of game play. Put Frogger, Pac-Man, Centipede, or Zaxxon into my hands and I go crazy. (Am I dating myself? <g>)

CGM: Are there any video games with a Tinseltown tie-in that you enjoyed playing?

DT: I don't have much time to play games of late, but I favor the retro games when I can find the time.

CGM: Don, Thank You very much for taking the time to talk with us. I want to tell you how impressive your web site is. We know that finding data about the computer and video game industry has been a long, exasperating search and we're happy that you had the heart and dedication to complete this enormous task. To find everything in chronological order from decade to decade and year to year (with the exact dates) really helps put everything into focus of how our favorite industry has grown over the years. We're looking forward to seeing the industry continue to grow and we wish you much success on your website as it continues to grow. Thank you again, Don.

DT: Wow, thanks. It sounds like I'm accomplishing something. <g>

CGM

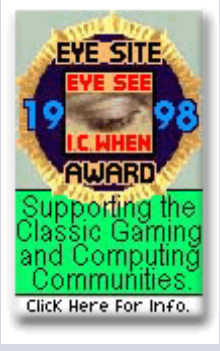
www.icwhen.com

Don Thomas's website, icwhen.com, is a huge depository of information regarding the history of videogames. The main feature of the site is an online book/timeline entitled *The Chronological History of Video Games and Computers.* This compendium covers the roots of videogames and computers beginning before the 1800's up to modern day gaming.

If you cut your visit to I.C. When after reading the timeline, you'd be selling yourself short.

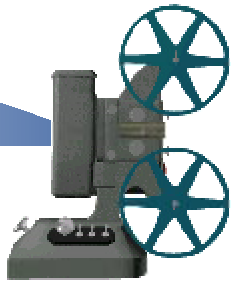
Other site features include:

- **Late Breaking Videogaming Industry News**
- **Entertaining as well as thought provoking articles written by Don Thomas**
- **Classified ads**
- **Virtual trading cards featuring many classic games**
- **Games and puzzles**
- **DVD navigator**
- **Humor**



My 25

Do Movies and Videogames create an unholy mix?



By Damien Quicksilver

Well, here's the "movie" issue of Classic Gamer Magazine. I guess the focus is the blissful union between movies and video games. Wait a minute! BLISSFUL UNION? Generally, I'd say that movies and video games are like oil and water - they don't quite mix. No, that's not right. They're like ammonia and bleach - they mix, but it'll KILL YOU. No, that's not it either. They're like your genitals mixed with a blender, ARRRGGHH!!

Have you ever played Back to the Future on the NES? That game is a tragedy. If aliens came to Earth and the first thing they saw was that video game, they would not hesitate to destroy our pathetic planet.

How about games turned into movies? Have you seen that Mortal Kombat movie? It is one of the most AWFUL movies I've seen in my LIFE! And what about its SEQUEL?

I remember reading an article in Video Games and Computer Entertainment quite a while ago. It explained that no one was out to get the rights to produce the "Gorillas in the Mist" game just to make a Donkey Kong rip-off. Ever since reading that, I've wondered, "Why the hell not?!" because taking a time-tried game concept and adding some movie elements to it works a LOT better than making a game that attempts to follow the concept of a movie. Movies and video games are just two totally different entities. Look at the games you like and look at the ones you don't. When a game is based on a movie, use Damien's Theorem:

The amount a game is like its movie counterpart is inversely proportional to the amount of fun the game is.

Try to make something both a video game *and* a movie and you know what you get? Night Trap! Have you ever played that piece of crap game? No? Good. Yes? I'm sorry. If you are unfamiliar with Night Trap, someone decided to make a movie-game. You watch a movie, and push the button at the right time to trap monsters. Sound like fun? It's not. And to make matters worse, in order to know when to trap the monsters, you have to CONSTANTLY switch between cameras filming different parts of the house. This creates a total lack of continuity, such that any hope of enjoying the movie is crushed.

Did you know that Street Fighter (the game) inspired Street Fighter: The Movie, which in turn inspired Street Fighter: The Movie (the game). It could go on forever! The game-movie-game-movie-game! People won't know whether they're holding a joystick or a ticket stub!

I'm done ranting about movies. . .did the rant go well?

Anyway, before I go, I have to talk about the last issue.

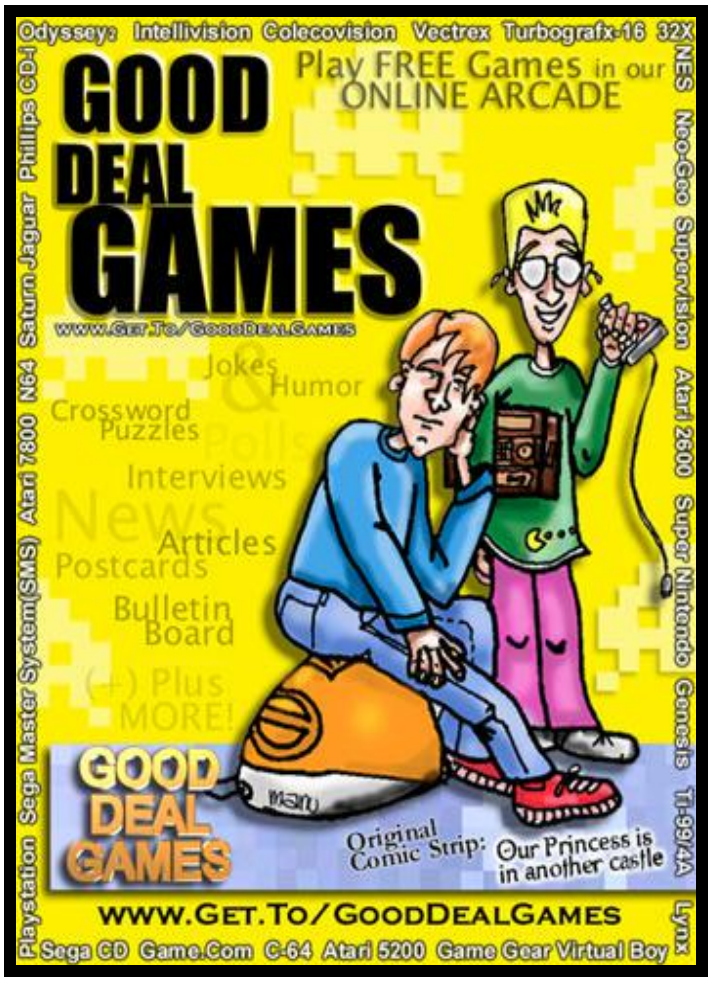
That letter about Pong was neat. It got me thinking; games haven't really ever gotten better than Pong, have they? Have you ever played that old computer game "Neuromancer"? In it, there were these "Monks of Pong" who dedicated their entire lives to the mystery that is Pong.

I was thinking the writer of the Pong letter could be one of those fellows. I hope so. I want to join the Monks of Pong!

You know what really bothers me? The fraction bit! And we're aiming for 9/10? I'm going higher than that! I say 11/10! These new magazines TALK 3-D, but the pages are still dull, boring 2-D. I say each page needs THREE sides! I've submitted my prototype where the pages look something like triangular prisms. But they probably won't listen to me. After all, *I'm* just a writer. I say, to hell with text! It's dull and flat! Braille is in 3-D! And it's been around for YEARS!

That's right, we've got all the ideas and motivation to make this mag something special. So move aside! CGM's gonna 187 the competition like Chris Lion's Super Breakout high score! But I'm not stopping at 9/10! We don't publish 9/10 of a magazine! I don't write 9/10 of an article! Could you imagine that? If someone only wrote 9/10 of an article! I mean, the article could end up getting cut off, right in the middle of a

CGM


Odyssey2 Intellivision Colecovision Vectrex Turbografx-16 32X
NES Neo-Geo Supervision Atari 2600 Super Nintendo Genesis TI-99/4A Lynx
Playstation Sega Master System(SMS) Atari 7800 N64 Saturn Jaguar Phillips CD-i
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Original Comic Strip: Our Princess is in another castle
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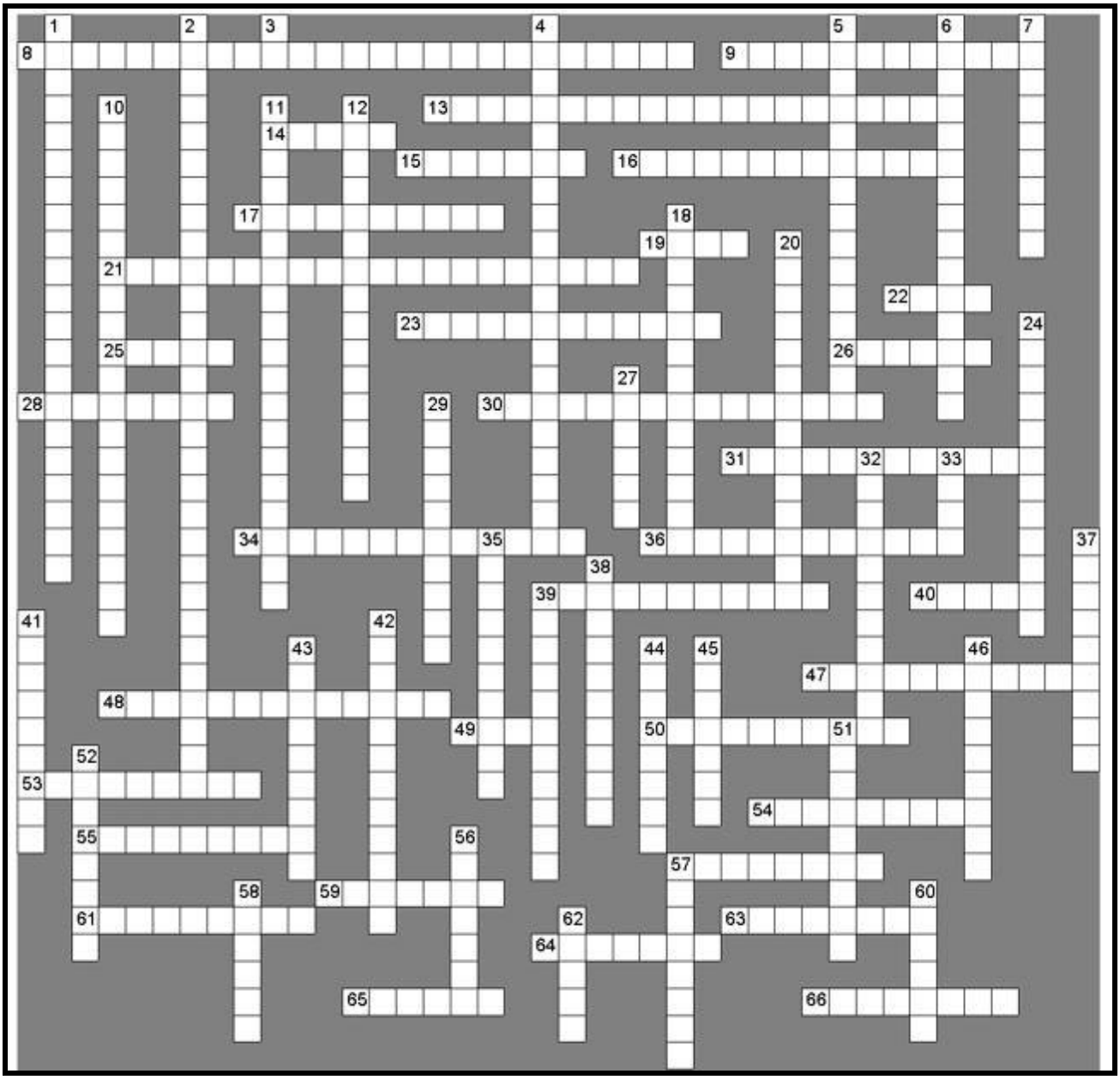


Across

8. Heroes in a half-shell
9. A veteren detective partnered w/ a young detective with a suicidal death wish
13. Game based on Wes Craven's hit horror movie
14. This '78 movie was originally titled "Star Beast"
15. War drama
16. Movie subtitle: They'll never get caught. They're on a mission from God
17. Sci-fi movies and games featuring an unstoppable cyborg
19. This game originally packaged w/ a logo T-shirt
21. What began as cartoon, became a game, and then a movie
22. This game and movie takes place in Neverland
23. Neo Geo title based on a movie which was based on a coin-op
25. A Carolco Pictures film
26. Game based on the largest movie franchise ever
28. This movie became a realtime war strategy game for the Colecovision
30. McFly
31. The sequel to this game was only released in Europe
34. This movie was based on two game characters
36. Mary Shelley
39. This serialized production brought to the 2600 by 20th Century Fox
40. Movie & Coin-op conversion only - no console release
47. Based on the 1993 Stallone action/adventure film
48. Disney animated feature
49. LJN release of the 1975 Universal horror film
50. Starring Michael Jackson
53. Rumored Intellivision title based on the famous international spy
54. Designed by Dallas North/Doug Neubauer
55. Dave Stevens' creation from comic books to Disney
57. The only movie licensed Vectrex release
59. Ocean released this Sam Raimi film
61. Prince of thieves
63. The Toho Co. releases these movies and games
64. Steven Spielberg wrote this movie
65. This movie license has had more games than any other franchise
66. Science Fiction w/ Schwarzenegger & Glover

Down

1. Five youths fall prey to a cannibal family
2. Designed by Jon Russell
3. Believed to have initiated the crash of '84
4. Movie subtitle: Invisible. Silent. Stolen.
5. This game went through a namechange and became Star Raiders 2
6. David Lubar designed this 20th Century Fox game
7. This 2600 Disney movie adaption was never released
10. Novel was "Who Censored ...
11. This game has a label variation mispelled
12. Comic Strip
18. Tom Cruise behind the wheel
20. Sony made game for the NES and Sega CD
24. movie and games based on this 60's TV series strange family
27. Movie subtitle: One Fun Place. One Fun Movie!
29. Best Action Game of 1984 on multiple systems (EGM)
32. Don't say this movie's name three times
33. Jeff Bridges .... Kevin Flynn/Clu □□Bruce Boxleitner □□Stars Jeff Bridges & Bruce Boxleitner
35. Lacking quality control in both the movie and the game
37. Madonna is sufficiently steamy as Breathless Mahoney
38. Martial artist release on both the NES & Turbografx-16
39. Game endorsing the live-action movie of the cartoon
41. movie subtitle: A family comedy without the family.
42. 65 million years in the making
43. This movie debuted Super Mario Brothers 3
44. Don't feed after midnight & do not get them wet
45. Three movies ... three games
46. Shelf life was reduced by public resistance of it's violent theme
51. Paint on, Paint off
52. This movie has been rendered in pixel & vector formats
56. Classic 1931 horror
57. DC Comics character gone movies and games
58. This game released on virtually all platforms at the time of released
60. This game was released 11 years after the movie
62. This game used the Super Action Controllers

Solution will be posted at: www.classicgamer.com & www.get.to/gooddealgames

CVG 101

-By Lee K. Seitz-

Cleaning Your Cartridges

Finally, after months of searching, you find a new and sought after cartridge for your collection. You take it home, plug it in your system, and. . .nothing! The game appears to be dead. Maybe it's just dusty. You take it out, blow on it, and try again. Still nothing. Your sense of euphoria has been dashed by a cruel jest of the fates. Or maybe not!

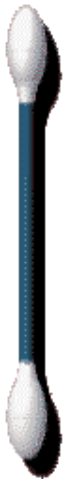
Just like everything else, cartridges get dirty over time. How dirty depends mainly on the environment they're kept in, but you probably only care whether they work or not.

Well, first let me suggest that you clean all the carts you find because some of the dirt on the contacts is going to stay in your console's cartridge slot. Using only clean cartridges will help prolong your system's life. (Think of it as "safe sex" for your video game system(s).)

Before I proceed, I must say that neither Classic Gamer Magazine nor I take any responsibility for any damage you might do to your cartridges following any of the advice below. Although the techniques described work for most people, I can't guarantee that something totally weird won't happen when you try them, so please don't blame me.

Okay, the first rule of cart cleaning is don't blow into them! Although I don't know of any studies that prove it, the conventional wisdom is that all you're doing is blowing moisture right onto the contacts, which will only make them corrode faster. Although it may seem that you're blowing the dust out of them and making a cartridge that didn't work a second ago work now, it was probably just the fact that you reseated the contacts by taking it out and putting it back in. If you must blow into them, try using a can of compressed air from your local electronics store. This is exactly what those cans were created for.

There is a better, more thorough way, although it's not as fast. First, go to your local pharmacy and buy some cotton swabs and a small bottle of isopropyl alcohol. The higher the percentage of alcohol, the better. The rest of the solution is water, you see. Alcohol evaporates quickly but as you know, water doesn't. Water causes corrosion so the less, the better.



As you have probably guessed by now, simply take a cotton swab and dip it in the alcohol. Then rub it up and down along the contacts. You will probably be surprised by how black the swab becomes. Now whatever you do, don't dip it back in the alcohol because then you'll just contaminate it. You can, however, rotate the swab to a clean area as you rub. You'll end up with three or four "sides" to your swab. While I'm at it, I also clean the inside of the cartridge around the contacts so the dust there doesn't settle back on them.

Oh, but you can't get to the contacts because there's just more black plastic on that end? Okay, then that's probably an Atari-made Atari 2600 cart. If you look closely, you'll see two tabs sticking out at each end next to a "hole." Take something like a nail file or knife and carefully poke it into one of those holes.

(Continued on page 62)

Catching Up With Buckner and Garcia

By Lee K. Seitz

"I've got a pocket full of quarters and I'm headed to the arcade."

Do those words sound familiar? If you're a child of the '80s, they should. They're the opening of Jerry Buckner and Gary Garcia's hit song, Pac-Man Fever, from the album of the same name. The Pac-Man Fever single went platinum (about 1,700,000 copies sold), while the album went gold (roughly 900,000 sold). Both were released in early 1982 and quickly rose up the charts. The single peaked at #9 on the Billboard chart and #3 on the Record World chart. Not bad for two radio jingle writers in Atlanta who wrote the song in about an hour.

Now, 17 years later, Buckner and Garcia have re-recorded and re-released the album on compact disc. Shortly after the re-release, Classic Gamer Magazine got Buckner and Garcia to take a little time for an exclusive e-mail interview.

The CD

Classic Gamer Magazine: Let's start with the most obvious question: Why re-release Pac-Man Fever on CD 17 years after the original album's release?

Buckner & Garcia: The demand and desire we have been receiving showed us a lot of people wanted a CD version.

CGM: This project seemed to be on-again/off-again for over a year. What finally prompted you to actually do it?

B&G: It took a while to get all our ducks in a row to make the release possible.

CGM: Did you have to renegotiate certain rights with the arcade manufacturers of each game?

B&G: We still have and maintain all the rights we had on the 1982 release.

CGM: What was involved in re-recording the songs? Did you still have your lyric and music sheets from when you originally recorded the album?

B&G: The original lyric sheets and music were gone, so we went on memory and the lyrics [Lee Seitz] had printed on [his] website.

The Record

CGM: Who sang what on both the album and CD?

Garcia: The vocals are done by me.

CGM: I know you were going to do a tour in Europe when the album was released there? Did it actually happen? Did you do any touring in North America?

B&G: There was never a European tour, but we did a lot of touring for promotion in the U.S.

CGM: In an interview in Video Games magazine, you said a man named Edgel Groves had recorded a country and western version of Pac-Man Fever. Did it ever see commercial release?

B&G: The country version of the song was never released.

CGM: Besides singing "Puck-Man" instead of "Pac-Man," were there any other differences in the Japanese version of Pac-Man Fever?

B&G: "Puc-Man" was the only change in the version for Japan.

CGM: I've seen a reference to a German version of Pac-Man Fever (called Pac-Man Feiber) sung by Gerald Mann. Did you or anyone else do any other versions in different languages?

Garcia: I have not heard about the German or any other different language versions.

Back to Today

CGM: So just what have you been up to since Pac-Man Fever slid off the charts?

B&G: We still are writing, recording, and producing music and advertising jingles.

CGM: What were your favorite video games in the '80s? Do you still play video games? (If so, which ones?)

Garcia: [My] favorite game was, is, and always will be Pac-Man.

You can order your own copy of the Pac-Man Fever CD for $15.99 plus $3.50 shipping and handling at www.bucknergarcia.com.

CGM

Frank's Video-Pinball Palace

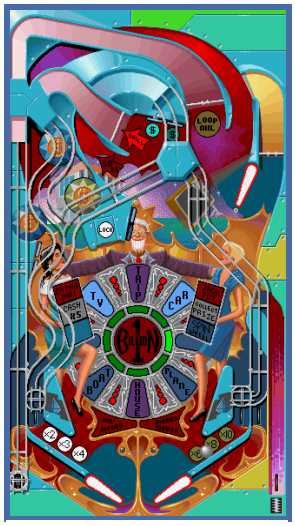
by Frank Traut

Welcome to the second installment of my Video-Pinball column. This issue, I will be reviewing more recent games. The first one is Pinball Fantasies for the Atari Jaguar. I originally owned a copy for the Amiga 1200 when it came out and now also have it for the PC. There are minor differences between the different platforms, which will be discussed later.

Pinball Fantasies is basically 4 pinball games in one package: Partyland, Speed Devils, Billion Dollar, and Stones n' Bones. Although I like most of the different boards, Partyland is my favorite with Billion Dollar coming in last.

Partyland

Partyland has that classic addictive quality that most real pinball machines inherently have. Lots of ramps, an extra flipper to make that tough ramp shot that builds your cyclone value, and great graphics are what this table is all about. Partyland also delivers that authentic "I'm at the carnival" experience, thanks to the graphics and sound effects. There is even a slot machine feature that spits out random point values and bonuses. I do have one minor gripe about these games for the Jaguar: Since this is a scrolling game, which means you can only see about 1/3 of the playfield at any given time, everything on the screen is too large. All things considered, this is not a feature you want in a pinball game. This is where the PC versions are superior. While they still scroll, the resolution is higher (objects are smaller), allowing you to see more on the screen at once. Since you can see more at once, you can make better ramp shots, etc. Other than that, I really like the game. You can change the settings on the Jaguar version to make the playfield scroll faster, allowing you to get a better "grip" of what's going on. **Partyland gets a score of 9 out of 10.**



Billion Dollar

Speed Devils is the second game included in Pinball Fantasies. This is almost a rip-off of a well known Williams arcade game called 'High Speed.' In Speed Devils, you have a flipper near the top of the playfield that assists in spelling 'P-I-T,' which, when accomplished, lights the bonus multiplier that you need to roll over. Speed Devils also has plenty of ramp shots to make, and stationary targets which you can cycle using your flipper buttons. This is pretty confusing actually as you cannot see where your ball is going to go anyway (thanks to only being able to see 1/ 3 of the screen at once), so luck had better be on your side if you are to make all of the targets. Because of this, **Speed Devils gets a 7.5 out of 10.** Nice board layout, colors and sound effects round out this game, making it more than just playable.

Billion Dollar is an obvious rip-off of Bally's 'Billion Dollar Game show starring Keith McTeeth!' with a Wheel of Fortune type wheel in the middle of the playfield. Basically, it's just a fancy bonus counting system that adds to the game show theme. Like Partyland and Speed Devils, you have a flipper near the top of the playfield that is supposed to assist in getting the ball up a ramp. The problem with the flipper in Billion Dollar is the fact that the flipper is too large. The large flipper could work, but it also sits a little too low to make your shot consistently. I consider this to be a design flaw, minor to some, but major to me as it affects the game play. There's not much to do in this game as there are fewer targets to hit than the games already mentioned. All in all, I do not enjoy Billion Dollar in the slightest. It seems as if they just threw it in the package to give you a higher perceived value. **I give it a 6 out of 10.**

Stones 'n Bones is my second favorite board. Lots of eerie sound effects and spooky graphics really add to the game's overall theme. Stationary targets are well laid out and do not "cycle" when you hit the flipper buttons, unlike the ones in Speed Devils. A couple of well laid out ramp shots keep your attention as you gather more bonus points. This is a great game that keeps

you coming back for more! **8.5 out of 10.**

Overall, Pinball Fantasies by 21st Century is a pretty decent pinball sim, offering plenty of challenge and enough variety to capture an avid pinball player's attention for more than a few minutes. It does have excellent game play and great ball physics, but not being able to see more of the screen at once really hurts the overall package. None of these games are multi-ball, by the way. While I do not require this in any pinball game, it seems as if modern games all have that feature, and it would have given these games a little more variety. **I give Pinball Fantasies an 8 out of 10**.

Speed Devils

Since I am thinking about the Atari Jaguar, I should also mention that there is another pinball game for it called '**Ruiner Pinball.**' Being the hardcore pinball fan that I am, this game barely deserves a full review as it is that bad. Atari had a couple of good ideas here, but somehow they all fell short. In Ruiner, you get 2 different games in one package: 'Ruiner' and 'Tower.' Pretty descriptive titles, huh? Ruiner is based on a 50's budget nuclear war movie, and Tower magically zaps you straight to hell without passing go. In fact, after selecting the Tower board, a screen pops up that reads, "Get Ready. Welcome to hell, Please hold. . ."

Stones 'n Bones

Basically, Tower is divided up into three screens with three sets of flippers, for the makes of a really long and boring playfield. Ruiner has a whole other playfield to the right of the main, making this an "ultra-wide" and totally unrealistic pinball sim. So, what's really wrong with these games? For starters, the ball "jiggles" as it moves around the playfield and the camera tries to stay with it, making it impossible for you not to throw up while playing! Seriously, the ball movement is *that* annoying. The next thing that has you scratching your head wondering how this game got through the play-testing department is the graphic layout and choice of colors used. The playfields are designed so horribly that you can hardly tell the difference between the "artwork" and the actual game (bumpers, targets, posts, etc). In Ruiner, you have targets, which happen to be airplanes, buzzing around the upper half of the main board. This is not only a silly concept but also creates slow-down in the game. Add oversized flippers to all of these design flaws and you have one terrible package. Up to 4 players can play, but you will be hard pressed to find 3 more people who want to be tortured with you. **I give Ruiner Pinball a whopping 4 out of 10 and Tower a 3.5**. The only reason they got as high a score as that is because of the music and speech. You can tell that they spent more time on those aspects than the actual game itself. Ruiner Pinball for the Jag is better left to your kids who don't know any better. But wait! Would you really want your kids playing the Tower board with that big-boobed Devil thing in the middle of the playfield? I wouldn't.

Moving on, I spy '**Super Pinball: Behind the Mask'** for the SNES. Now this is a pretty decent pintable sim. Guess what? You can see the playfield in its entirety on your screen without any scrolling! Super Pinball for the SNES features 3 different games: '**Jolly Joker,**' '**Blackbeard and Ironmen,**' and '**Wizard.**' These 3 games all share one thing in common: they all have the same geek (but dressed differently) on the backglass and playfields! Sorry, I just think that's kind of funny. Anyway, onto the game play. All 3 boards have different themes but all pretty much share the same number of targets and goals to reach, making them pretty repetitive in nature. Fortunately the game play is excellent and that's what any game should be about. There is not all that much to do but make some ramp shots, hit some drop targets, and get the ball to go into a couple of bonus saucers. There is a multi-ball mode and a skill shot at the beginning of each ball, which is a way to get some quick points. About the only thing I can think of that could have been improved upon was the choice of colors and variety in game play. Come to think of it, the background music is a little cheesy also but does not ruin the games by any stretch of the imagination. Really though, this game is well worth the $10 it costs at your local Toys 'R Us. Get it quick before they're all gone forever! Even though the boards are different, they vary slightly, so overall, **I give Super Pinball a score of 8 out of 10.**

Ruiner Pinball

Dragon's Fury for the Sega Genesis. . .now that's what I'm

talkin' about! Do you remember Devil's Crush for the TG-16? Well, this is that game and more. It's basically identical to its TG-16 counterpart, but with a couple of different bonus screens. The screen resolution is also a little different as is the sound, but most people would never notice. Dragon's Fury has you battling the dark forces of a supernatural world, so prepare yourself for the most fantastic time of your life! Like 'Tower' for the Jaguar, this game has 3 levels of pinball playing fun to be had. But unlike the Jag pinball, they did this one right. On top of the massive scrolling playfield, there are 6 bonus rounds where you will "battle" dragons, vampire bats, live skulls, and other evil monsters. You do have creatures (targets) walking around the playfield, but somehow they seem to fit and do not come off as being cheesy. Game play is top notch. No jittery ball movement, great flipper to ball physics, and you can see a lot of the screen at once (even though it does scroll). Tengen did us all a favor by porting this over for the Genesis. If you only have a TG-16, chances are you already have it or at least know about it. If you do not have this game for either system, get it! You won't be disappointed.

It should also be noted that Tengen made a sequel of Dragon's Fury called Dragon's Revenge for the Genesis. It is an original game and was not part of the TG-16 lineup of video pinball games. I do not currently own Dragon's Revenge but vaguely remember playing it back in the day. I remember it not being as fun as Dragon's Fury/Devil's Crush. Bottom line: **I give Dragon's Fury or Devil's Crush a 9.5 out of 10.**

Microsoft's Pinball Arcade was featured as a sidebar in my previous pinball column, but I did not talk about it. This really unique package deserves some attention. When it came out, it retailed for $30 but can now be had for $20-$25 in some stores. Way to go Microsoft! This high quality package includes seven authentic arcade Gottlieb pinball games from the 30s to the 90s! Highlights include '**Baffle Ball**,' '**Humpty Dumpty**,' and '**Haunted House**.' Baffle Ball is not the pinball most people think of when they think pinball. Pinball games from that era did not have flippers, targets, etc. You shot the ball onto the playfield and hoped that it fell into the most "point scoring" saucers. By the time Humpty Dumpty came out, they had introduced us to the concept of flippers (6 of them!) to gain better control of the ball. Even though these early flipper games existed, they were not used the way they are today. The old games' flippers were installed "backwards." Very unique and quite challenging! Remember, these older games were not designed to have the ball blasting around at 90 mph like they are today! Haunted House was, and still is, pretty popular among pinball collectors, although I cannot understand why. Two negative issues come to mind. The first and most important is the fact that by the time Gottlieb was making electronic games, they were the bane of the arcade industry. This was partly due to Gottlieb selling their pinball division to Columbia Pictures. All hell broke loose when that happened. Gottlieb, king of the hill at one point, now the laughing stock (literally) of every arcade owner and operator. Anyway, the second reason I don't like Haunted House is because there are 3 levels of playing fields here! Sounds "cool," right? Wrong. Since there are so many different levels to the game (a "basement," "main floor," and "attic"), it leaves little to no room for any type of real game play. The game's "main floor" layout is almost non-existent, which is pretty boring if you ask me. One of the only games that could get away with the multiple level playing field was Williams' Black Knight; that game kicks ass, but that goes to show you the difference between a properly designed game and a poorly designed one. I guess I should mention that Black Knight does not have a "basement," which is a good thing. I guess I can see why some people actually like Haunted House. It does have a cool theme and sound effects and for the time, was very different than any other game. As it sits as an arcade game, Haunted House is better left to pinball mechanic wizards than pinball playing wizards.

Baffle Ball

Onto the problems now of shrinking real arcade games down to the PC CD-ROM format. While an overall great package, Microsoft literally dropped the ball on a few important aspects of the real pinball arcade experience. First and foremost, you cannot change the tilt or angle of the games! I find that they are a little too slow for my tastes. You would think that they

could have included this in the options but apparently, that feature was overlooked. Second, to make the pinball experience more "realistic," they included the glare of the backglass onto the glass of the playfield! Not cool at all. I don't want to see this on my real pinball game, let alone my video-pinball game. In fact, glare can be severely reduced by how many lights you put in the backglass and by the game location's lighting. The third issue is a lack of rubber at the end of the shooter tip! While this makes no difference in the realm of your computer, it is not realistic and makes me cringe every time I hear that "clinking" sound! Ouch! In a real arcade pinball, you always want a rubber shooter tip so you don't damage the ball, which in turn would damage your playfield. My final issue preventing this from being a truly superior pinball playing experience (besides the fact that none of these games are overly fun to play) is the ball mechanics. Even on my hi-end computer system, this game seems quite lethargic. The ball moves "funny" and the flippers seem a little sluggish. In other words, the game has that typical Microsoft "game play" that most of their games seem to have. Those into computers know what I mean.

Why in the hell did Microsoft make a Gottlieb collection when there are much better game companies like Bally and Williams to emulate? In a word, licensing. I am sure it was dirt cheap to secure the rights to Gottlieb/Premier. They could have at least given us a better selection of Gottlieb games to choose from. Some of my personal favorites include 'Big Brave or Big Indian,' 'Royal Flush,' 'Close Encounters,' 'Pop-A-Card or Drop-A-Card,' and 'Bank Shot.' What I would really like is to see Microsoft fix the "bugs" I mentioned and come out with a Bally and a Williams collection. Ten games each, mind you, with a way to adjust the slant of the playfield.

As Microsoft's Gottlieb Pinball Arcade Collection sits, I give it an 8.5 for effort, packaging, and historical importance out of 10.

See you next issue as I continue my video-pinball ramblings!

CGM

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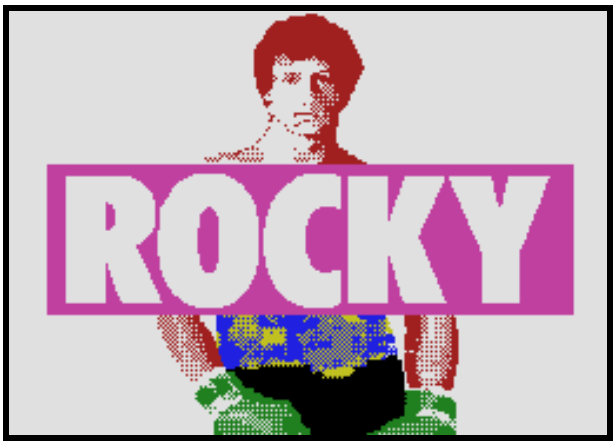

"I pity da fool who don't own this game!"

In writing this review, I knew that line would have to come into play. I felt it best to get it out of the way early on.

Rocky Super Action Boxing was definitely a showcase game, demonstrating the power of the ColecoVision. At the time, when the screenshots were released to the videogame magazines, they had to impress upon us that "these are not artist mock-ups!" The screenshots showed Rocky Balboa and Clubber Lang duking it out in a boxing ring. The amazing thing was that they *actually* looked like who they were meant to look like. Clubber Lang (Mr. T) had his trademark Mohawk haircut, and Rocky had what appeared to be a dumb expression on his face.

Not an artist's rendition!

In order to play the game, you had to have the Super Action Controllers. They look more like clumsy weapons than game controllers. These huge devices feature a joystick, keypad, and roller on top, and four trigger buttons below. There is also a plastic guard to shield your trigger fingers from God knows what. It was definitely a monstrosity, but it was a monstrosity I had to have in order to play Rocky.

Super Action Controller

After popping the cartridge in and choosing your boxer and degree of difficulty, you are greeted by a very impressive image of Rocky posing to the electronic hum of his theme song.

This is where the game begins to lack a bit in the game play department. Moving your boxer is more akin to moving a Sumo wrestler. The instruction manual promises "quick maneuvering." Don't count on it. These pugilists tend to waddle around the ring rather than dance. In fact, the closest they get to dancing is when they fall into a "clinch" and the ref has to break it up.

Their movement is limited to back and forth and up and down. Never at any point are they able to circle each other. Rocky is *always* on the left and clubber is *always* on the right. And the referee is always magically hopping to wherever he pleases.

Clubber Takes a Nap

The four buttoned controller allows for two offensive punches and two defensive blocks. Two gauges at the top of the screen alert you to the daze and fatigue level of your boxer. A blue square will fill in with black when too many shots to the head are received and the boxer becomes dazed. Fatigue results from too many body blows, and a small gray box will fill with red to indicate the level of exhaustion. Since your best objective is to go for a knockout, the best strategy is to dole out equal poundings to both the head and the body. Filling the blue box will result in a knockout, but couple it with a full red box and your opponent is not likely to get back up. This is, of course, the most fun in the "Head to Head" option, where you get to beat one of your friends senseless.

Rocky Wins!

Rocky Super Action Boxing is not a bad game, but it's not a great game either. It's visually wonderful, but some of that power could have easily been used to enhance the game play.

Overall Rating: B-

CGM

Classic Gaming On The world wide web

Super Pong

David Winter has created a site dedicated to the origins of Pong and Pong-like clones. This site offers an in-depth look at the beginnings of videogames and systems, and has plenty of interesting historical facts, timelines, bios, and pictures to enhance your visit. And, for those of you who "parlez Francais," visit their mirrored French version!
http://superpong.8m.com

ATARI 2600 NEXUS

Atari 2600 Nexus

Created by Alex Bilstein, this labor of love reveals everything you ever wanted to know about the Atari 2600, including a rarity guide; images of [illegible] sticks, cartridge boxes, and labels; and a library with FAQ's, reference, history, maps, Easter eggs, and more. The site also hosts a message board, classified ads, and an extremely extensive list of related links.

Alex has put a lot of time and effort into producing his website and has been recognized by many for his hard work.
http://ccwf.cc.utexas.edu/~bilstein/atari2600nexus/index.html

ClassicGaming.com

"Gaming the way you remember it" is ClassicGaming.com's motto, as they strive to reunite gamers with their favorite games of old by way of emulation.

The website, run by Kevin "Fragmaster" Bowen, Jonathan "Harry Tuttle" Burtenshaw, and Till "SYS2064" Oldemeyer, offers links to other sites with information on classic videogames and emulation, as well as some more current games such as Quake and Unreal. They even offer free web-hosting for sites that fulfill certain requirements and are related to classic videogames.
http://www.classicgaming.com/

First Church of Pac-Man

His eminence, the Reverend Shoebox, has created a site for all that is "Pac."

Updated regularly, you can be sure you are getting the freshest information about your favorite yellow dot.

Tons of links, news, photos, and general silliness will keep you coming back for more.
http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Lofts/8112/pac.htm

Esotek's Tron Archive

Scott Skerchock's Tron fan page features regularly updated news, rare pictures, movie and game information, as well as many free downloads.

Check out the "Toys" section to get a good look at the extremely rare Tron action figures and the Lightcycles.
http://users.aol.com/esotek/tronmain.html

Videogame Music Archive

"Do you know Frogger?"
"No, but maybe if you hum a few bars. . ."

Here you can find many of those hummable hits once only heard in arcades, such as "Galaga Intro" and the "Pitfall 2" theme, as well as more contemporary hits from such games as Zelda: Ocarina of Time and Crash Bandicoot.

These musical bits have been recorded in the always quirky "MIDI" format but that injects all new charm into them.
http://www.vgmusic.com/

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CLASSIC EASTER EGGS

Like many Atari programmers, Howard Scott Warshaw slipped a few Easter Eggs into his games.

Yars' Revenge

If you kill the swirl fireball in mid-air, and then position the Yar so the spot on its back is in the same plane as the black streak, you'll get Warshaw's initials, forwards and backwards: HSWWSH. This egg is sometimes referred to as "The Ghost of Yar."

So why write the initials forwards and backwards? "The reason it's like that is to tip off the idea that Yar is Ray backwards and all that," Warshaw says.

Raiders of the Lost Ark

Warshaw's second game has both his initials and a Yar hidden inside it. "For Raiders, you can get an HSW2 at the end, and you can also find a Yar," Warshaw says. "There's one point in the treasure room where you're digging for treasure, and if you have the right configuration in your inventory, when you start digging, a Yar will fly up through the room."

How to do it: Once you've obtained the Chai and the parachute, go to the Mesa and fall off. Quickly release the Chai and a Yar will appear at the top of the screen.

E.T.

There are all kinds of hidden treasures in Warshaw's third game. Along with his initials, there are hidden references to Yars' Revenge and Raiders of the Lost Ark.

According to Howard Scott Warshaw, "When you heal the flower, if you have the right configuration in the game, on one level, a flower turns into a Yar and flies out of the well. On the next level, if you do it again, it turns into Indiana Jones."

How to do it: Give seven Reese's Pieces to Elliott then find a pit which contains a flower. Make it bloom and watch for the Yar.

"Also, another thing about E.T., if you look at it real carefully, you'll notice that each of the pieces of the phone is an H, an S, and a W. They're a little abstract, bent around a little, but if you look at them carefully you'll see it," says Howard.

-Darin Powell

Pong (PSX)

To open the FIRST level, press pause on the "zone" select screen. Then press L1, R1, L1, R1, then unpause the game.

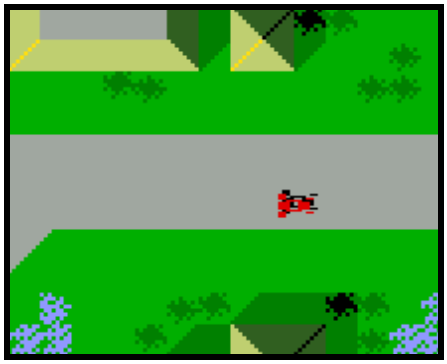
To open the SECOND level, press pause on the "zone" select screen. Then press L2, R2, L2, R2, then unpause the game.

To open the THIRD level, press pause on the "zone" select screen. Then press and HOLD L1, R1, L2, R2, then unpause the game.

This also opens the secret powerups in the games as well and the three classic black and white Pong versions.

-Courtesy of "Professor Pac-Man" @ www.clubs.yahoo.com/pacmanuniversity

Auto Racing (Intellivision)



The five race courses were created as a "globe." That is, you can drive off one course and go to another one, and by driving in the same direction, you will return to the course on which you originally started. There is even a secret drag strip hidden along the way.

Robotron 64

From the main menu choose "setup" then enter this code for 50 free lives:
Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, C-left, C-right, C-left, C-right.

Yars' Revenge (GB Color)

Want to start at any level up to number 240? Enter "O + O O" at the code screen and choose your level.

Fathom (Atari 2600)

If you release the mermaid seven times, the address for Imagic's headquarters will appear at the bottom of the screen.

Or, as Rob Fulop said at "World of Atari 98," ". . .or you could just look at the back of the box and get it. It's there, too."

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Have an Easter Egg or cheat code you want to share? Send it on in and we'll print it here.

E-mail it to:
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Atari 7800	___	___	Sega Saturn	___	___
Atari Jaguar	___	___	Sega 32X	___	___
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3. _____

Your Top Three Favorite Computer Games Are: (Game and System)

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Your Top Three Favorite Arcade Coin-Ops Are: (Game)

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DEEP THAW

Megaforce...A Mega Farce!

By
Chris Lion

It was 1982 and my good friend Roxy and I went off to see the most highly anticipated film of the week: Megaforce. We were especially interested because that great new show *Entertainment Tonight* had just shown an "in depth" piece on how the US Army actually went out to the set to inspect the vehicles used in the film, to make sure the filmmakers were not giving away any of our "military secrets" to the "commies." For those of you who don't remember the 80s, the commies were our enemies, Nancy Reagan was president, and the pop group Spandau Ballet was popular (along with a host of other mostly forgotten bands).

Upon returning to Roxy's house, her mother (still playing Super Breakout after 8 consecutive hours) asked us how we enjoyed the movie. Roxy summed it all up when she said, "Boy, they sure wore tight pants!" Roxy was summarily sent to her room, and I was told to go home and not to take Roxy to any more "pornographic movies."

If only Megaforce were pornographic, it might have been saved. The plot, if one could call it that, was to save the world from Barry Bostwick's tight pants, blow-dried hair, plus, his weird kissing of his thumb and then waving it towards Zara (played by Persis Khambatta, who took bad acting to a whole new level).

It was just SO darn awful. Ace Hunter (Bostwick) is the leader of a spandex-wearing group of international mercenaries. Barry was VERY thin and the pants were VERY tight. At one point, during an unnecessary side silhouette shot, I don't think anyone in the theatre could have told you what the scene was about. . .'it' was downright hypnotic! We just kept staring and saying, "What's he got in there, a potato?"

And what of the "military secrets" that the US government was so worried about? Slapping pieces of plastic onto a dirt bike and having it spew out colored smoke, does not a military weapon make. Suddenly I learned what the term "publicity" really meant: ***bold face lying.*** Roxy tried, but she could never convince me that dirt bikes with little plastic shields that fired rockets while spewing multi-colored smoke, then inexplicitly sprouting wings and flying, could be even a remote possibility.
And no, I'm not kidding.

Barry Bostwick couldn't get work for years after this film and Khambatta continued on to make some of the biggest pieces of crap in cinematic history. Apparently, Bruce Willis wanted her for Hudson Hawke, but she was busy dooming another project to obscurity and had to decline. Amazingly, the director, Hal Needham ("Stroker Ace" (1983), "Cannonball Run I & II" (1981, 1984), and the BMX classic "Rad" (1986) actually continues to get directing work. Apparently, pacts with the devil do exist.

Unfortunately, this was the beginning of synergy, where a movie gets tied in with anything and everything remotely associated. Long since lost is my Ace Hunter action figure (with tight pants and 'blow-dry grip'). Tragically, the video game version of Megaforce survives to this day. Unlike the instant gratification of the 90s, it took a full six months after the movie was released for the game to appear on the shelves (and stay there until shoved onto the discount racks). I think the game is just about as exciting as the movie itself, without the overacting and blow-dried hair. Thankfully, the videogame contains no kissing of thumbs or silhouettes of Barry Bostwick in tight pants.

Eventually, Roxy's mom got over her fear of Barry Bostwick and bought the game for her "totally awesome Atari 2600." (Note: everything in the 80s was either "totally" or "awesome." Putting the two together indicated that it was of the highest quality). Even back then, with my limited hand eye coordination, I played the game in a totally awesome manner.

Recently, I found a "Mega Force" cartridge. Yes, it even spells the name wrong. . .maybe they wanted to discern the game from the movie. There may be a number of people out there with a fear of seeing Barry Bostwick in skin-tight pants, or possibly Khambatta's 'box office poison' might also infect the videogame, and this was a way of somehow alleviating those fears of potential players.

The object of this game is to destroy the enemy's desert "town," while protecting my own desert

"town." Actually, I'm assuming they are towns. The "towns" are silos with bulbous tops. While Barry Bostwick may not be giving us an eyeful, this game certainly makes up for it. Six various sized "buildings" (ranging from "average" to "well-endowed") make up the "town." It looks like they might have been inspired by a Masters & Johnson study.

The game's colors are staggering! The bold use of tan and blue (desert and sky) is stunning, with just a dash of red for the far off mountains. In a bit of whimsy, they even put in four (count' em) FOUR tiny palm trees! Who could have a war in such a paradise? My town was white and yellow, while the enemy's town was black and red (is it just me, or did their town seem. . . 'bigger'?)

On the plus side, transportation in the game is one of those cool 'flying motorcycles' that Ace Hunter flew so stunningly in the film. However, it did not come with plastic shields nor did it spew multi-colored smoke. But it did fly and that at least made it awesome (although not totally).

The enemy in the film was supposed to be a Qadhafi-like figure (today, we would say a Saddam-like figure), but in the game the enemy appeared to be the alien ships from Space Invaders (except they flew horizontally). If any of the enemies made it past me, they would instantly be upon my town and it would be half destroyed before I could manage to turn around.

As anyone can tell you, I'm an idiot with most video games. I still struggle with Super Breakout (it's my secret shame). However, I mastered this game in less than half an hour (for me to master ANYTHING in a half hour is unheard of). It got so easy, so quickly, that I actually started to long for the movie. It was then I ripped the cartridge from the 2600, ran to the kitchen and crammed it down the garbage disposal.

Where were the skintight pants and the blow-dried hair? Where was Persis Khambatta and her stilted acting? Not once did I see billows of colored smoke, or anyone kissing their thumbs and shoving them skyward.

Watching the film and playing the game left me with a sense of intense nausea and the conviction that I don't get paid enough to do this. Florida recently decommissioned its electric chair and replaced it with a VCR and a bootleg copy of MegaForce. Unfortunately, the Human Rights Commission deemed that as "cruel and unusual punishment." It was then suggested that they substitute that with the videogame version of the film. This was eventually thrown out, not because of the agonizing screams coming from the condemned, but because it took so damn long to kill them; they were bored to death.

I implore you to avoid this film and game. It will cause you nothing but heartburn and heartache. Then again, MegaForce is difficult to find; it is banned in most western countries. For a totally awesome reason.

CGM

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Cleaning Your Cartridges

(Continued from page 50)

You should see the "door" on the long slot in the middle slide up. Now simply push back on the entire black cover and the contacts should be exposed.

At this point, most cartridges will work if they didn't already. Occasionally you'll have a stubborn one with harsher corrosion that won't clean off with this technique. Now you have to bring in the big gun: a pencil eraser. Simply rub the eraser up and down on the contacts. This goes with the "grain" of the contacts from their many insertions into and removals from consoles. Don't over rub, as the eraser can actually remove the conductive coating of the contact. Once you do that, your cartridge will no longer work, no matter how much you clean it.

You might have problems getting the eraser to the contacts. William Cassidy once suggested cutting a slice of eraser and gluing it to a Popsicle stick. If that doesn't work, you can try taking the casing off the cartridge to better get at the contacts. Many systems' cartridges are held together with a screw under the label. This can lead to a dilemma if the label is in excellent shape. Do you want a beautiful looking cartridge or one that works?

There are a few options. You can use a utility knife to cut a small "x" over the screw, carefully peel the label back, and then fold it back down when done. You might also try removing the label (or peeling it back enough to get to the screw) and then re-applying it. If you do this, try heating the label with a hair dryer. This usually loosens the glue so that you can keep the label in good condition if you're careful.

As time goes on, more and more cartridges will go "bad," when actually they're just dirty. Keeping your cartridges, and thus your system, clean will increase their lifetime. And hopefully you'll get a lifetime's worth of play out of them as well.

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